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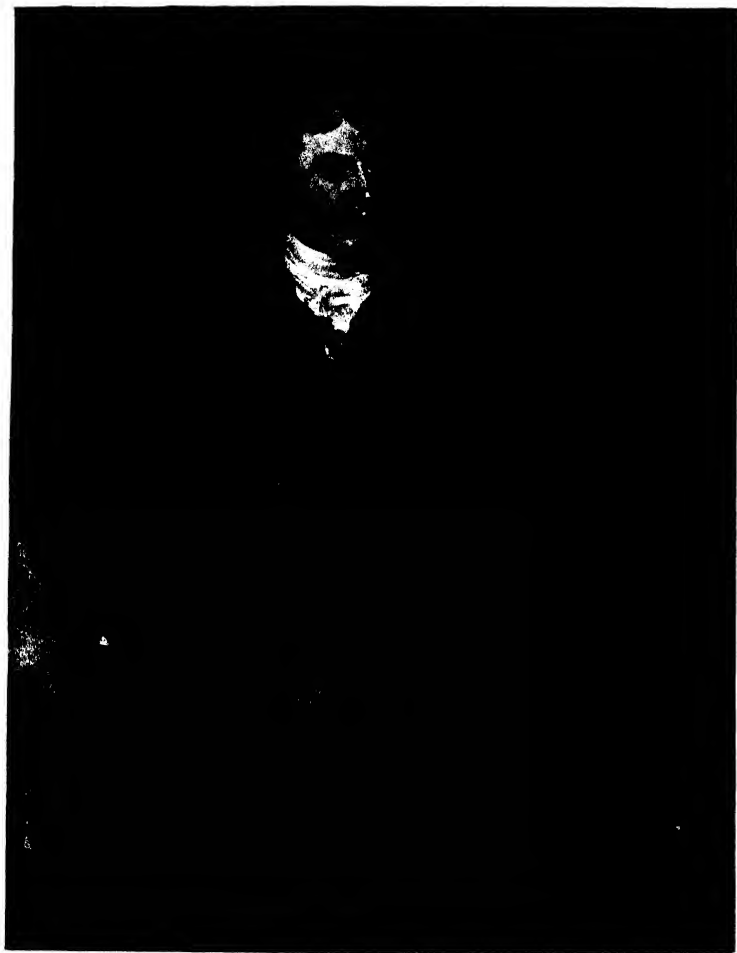
THE RISE OF CASTLEREAGH



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*Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh.
From the portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, P. R. A. in the collection of
The Most Honourable the Marquess of Londonderry, K. G.*

THE RISE OF CASTLEREAGH

BY

H. M. HYDE

SOMETIME EXHIBITIONER OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD

WITH A FOREWORD BY

THE MOST HON. THE MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY
K.G.

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TO MY DEAR FRIEND
H. R. B.
IN GRATITUDE
FOR
MUCH KINDNESS

FOREWORD

I HAVE long felt the need of an impartial account of the life of Castlereagh and the great services which he rendered to the British nation. Attempts have been made at different times during the last century, notably by Lord Salisbury (*Quarterly Review*, January, 1862), to satisfy this need by placing his policy, particularly during his tenure of the Foreign Office, in the light which it deserves. The history of a statesman's policy, however, is different from that of his life. In biography aspects of policy must be considered in relation to the subject's career as a whole rather than in relation primarily to other personalities and events. Indeed, it is impossible to understand fully a statesman's political achievements without first obtaining a clear view of his own personality and individual character. This object Mr. Hyde has successfully realized in his account of the early and by no means the least important period of Castlereagh's life. Mr. Hyde in a remarkably graphic and lucid narrative has traced the history of his rapid and extraordinary rise to power in Ireland at the close of the eighteenth century, and has indicated the outstanding personal qualities which commended him to successive British Prime Ministers and obliged them to seek his assistance in carrying on the government of the United Kingdom.

To me, Castlereagh's great-great nephew, this volume is an impressive refutation of the baseless calumnies which have assailed his name. At the same time it proclaims the great part played by him during those early years of the nineteenth century which culminated in the overthrow of Napoleon and the success of the subsequent negotiations which, in the phrase of the time, 'gave peace to Europe.'

The course of Anglo-Irish relations has never been smooth for any appreciable length of time, and their condition was neither happy nor easy to understand when Castlereagh was called upon to direct them. His conspicuous achievement during this period was two-fold. First, by his tact, good management, and forbearance he saved his country from the horrors of a serious civil war and from ultimate secession from Great Britain; secondly, by incorporating the two kingdoms in one legislature he was instrumental in effecting a settlement which he hoped would prove

enduring, a settlement which actually remained in substantial operation till 1920, and which ultimately produced in Ireland a state of peace and material prosperity which hitherto had been unknown ; so much so, indeed, that in April, 1907, Mr. Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland, who could certainly not be accused of being a friend of the Union, said that Ireland had never been so peaceful for six hundred years.

This settlement Castlereagh intended should be implemented on the English side by the relief of the Roman Catholics in Ireland from their political disabilities, and it was through no fault of his that the realization of this desire was postponed until 1829, seven years after his death. For this achievement his name has been blackened and his memory defamed by a long series of poets, party rhyme-sters, political pamphleteers and pseudo-historians. On the other hand, no individual, whose domestic life was so serenely contented and virtuous as Castlereagh's, could in his public conduct be the villain he is described by these so-called authorities. In reality, his administration was one of studied moderation and he set his face resolutely against all forms of oppression and cruelty. He had, for example, to prevent the Orange and United Irish societies from exterminating each other. Though he could not always prevent their conflicts, he was scrupulously fair in his treatment of the two rival parties and he employed every means at his disposal to keep sectarian feeling within bounds. Finally, he showed a real breadth of political vision, and, by putting national advantage before personal gain, he provided a much needed and salutary example in the public life of his day. His desire for measures of permanent imperial security and consolidation was considerably in advance of his times. Above all, his speculations were directly related to practical possibilities, and, if he made few contributions to political thought, he has left behind an example of a man in action which future politicians may not be ashamed to follow.

I welcome this book as an encouraging sign that public opinion is gradually but surely becoming more favourable to Castlereagh, as the true significance of his work is realized. Certainly, there is no doubt that after a fitful age of disrespect and abuse, he appears in name and reputation to be faring better than friend and enemy alike could have thought possible a century ago.

LONDONDERRY.

6th February, 1933.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A NUMBER of sympathetic considerations have governed the writing of this book. First, the desire to investigate the partisan charges brought against the character of Castlereagh by repeated generations of politicians and writers in Ireland induced me to undertake it. This desire was prompted partly by curiosity to ascertain whether the man was as black as he had been painted in the popular imagination, and partly by the knowledge that scientific studies of his career had been confined almost exclusively to the period covered by his foreign ministry, namely the last ten years of his life. Then, it was clear to me that if his reputation had been to a certain extent rehabilitated as a diplomatist, Castlereagh was still the bogey of Irish nationalist politics. For my part I cannot claim to have exhausted every relevant source of information, but I have endeavoured conscientiously to examine as many fresh channels as possible bearing on the history of Castlereagh's extraordinary rise to power in his native country ; and it is consequently my hope that the outcome of these researches which the following pages will disclose may lead to a fairer judgment of a much hated and misunderstood statesman being formed by the public on both sides of the Irish Sea.

Such investigations as I have been able to pursue would not have been possible but for the unfailing courtesy and kindness of a number of individuals who have placed their archives at my disposal and in many cases have given me the benefit of their superior knowledge of the subject. First of all, I must express my deep sense of gratitude to the Marquess of Londonderry for the great interest which he has taken in this work and for the various ways in which he has helped it forward. Unrestricted access to the magnificent collection of manuscripts and printed books in his possession has greatly simplified my task, while permission to conduct my researches in person at Londonderry House and Newtownards has made this task a very pleasant one. In this expression of thanks

I must include the Marchioness of Londonderry who has also shown great interest in this book and has made a number of helpful suggestions, particularly with regard to the illustrations. I am indebted to Lady Londonderry too for supplying me with some interesting unpublished genealogical data.

In spite of the shipwreck in which many of Castlereagh's private and official papers were lost, and other accidents which diminished their amount, the Londonderry archives contain about two thousand documents in the shape of letters, despatches, speeches and memoranda belonging to the early period of his life. Not the least noteworthy of these are the letters from Castlereagh to his wife which throw a new and remarkable light on his character, but which with a few specified exceptions it has not been found possible to publish in the past. In the purely official sphere the most important documents have fortunately been preserved in the collections of Dublin Castle and the Home Office. The latter may now be consulted in the English Public Record Office. Since nearly all the published correspondence of Castlereagh with his political contemporaries has been taken from this source, I have found it of the utmost value in supplying the numerous omissions which either purposely or accidentally appear in the printed versions of these letters. The Dublin Castle MSS. consist mostly of documents which were considered to be of too intimate and confidential a nature to warrant their transference to the Four Courts with the rest of the public archives in Ireland, and thus they escaped the destruction which befel the latter in 1922. Both the Dublin Castle MSS. and the Home Office archives contain many important and hitherto unpublished letters of Castlereagh, and I must express my thanks to the officials concerned in making them available for me. In particular I must thank Mr. W. T. Cosgrave, late President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, for permission to see the State Papers in the Record Tower, Dublin Castle ; and also my friend Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, late Minister of Defence, for affording me exceptional facilities to explore other parts of the Castle.

My thanks are also due to the following : to the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to reproduce portions of the Auckland, Buckinghamshire, Hardwicke, Pelham, and Percy Papers ; and to the Public Record Office for similar permission

with regard to the Pitt MSS. ; to the Royal Irish Academy for permission to quote a number of unpublished passages from the Charlemont Correspondence ; to Mrs. Duffin and to the Marquess of Downshire (through the kind intervention of Dr. D. A. Chart) for similar permission with regard to the Drennan Letters and the Downshire Letters respectively ; to Dr. E. J. Gwynn for permission to see the Sirr Papers in Trinity College, Dublin ; to Miss Elizabeth Stone for the use of a valuable MS. history of the Stewart family compiled by an ancestor ; to the Governors of the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, for access to the rare collection of Irish pamphlets and newspapers in their charge ; to the Rev. E. Savell Hicks for information respecting Castlereagh's baptism and for permission to inspect the baptismal register of the Strand Street (Dublin) Presbyterian Congregation which is in his keeping ; to Sir Robert F. Scott for similar information respecting Castlereagh's admission to St. John's College, Cambridge ; to Mr. T. U. Sadleir for his expert genealogical advice and also for allowing me to inspect the Lords' Entries in the Office of Arms, Dublin Castle ; to Miss Todd for helping me in the Londonderry Estate Office at Newtownards ; to Dr. D. A. Chart, Dr. J. S. Crone, and Professor W. Alison Phillips for reading this book in proof form and making many valuable criticisms and suggestions ; and to the Rt. Hon. Samuel Cunningham, Mr. S. Shannon Millin, Mr. R. J. Welch, Miss Olga Fielden, and many others who prefer to remain unmentioned, for their assistance and encouragement.

For permission to reproduce illustrations my thanks are due to the Marquess of Londonderry, Sir William Whitla, and the Trustees of the British Museum. For photographic help I am principally indebted to Mr. Alexander Hogg of Belfast.

For the mistakes which the discerning may discover, and which are inevitable in a work of this kind, I have only myself to thank.

An attempt has been made by means of footnotes to indicate some authority for every important statement of fact contained in the text. A bibliography of the principal authorities consulted will be found at the end of the volume. In the case of letters, despatches, and memoranda, the names of the senders and recipients together with the dates of their composition have been given wherever possible.

All the departmental correspondence relating to Ireland which has been utilised at the Public Record Office in London is to be found in Series 100 of the official *List of Home Office Records*, and reference is made to it by the number of the folio or bundle under that heading, *e.g.* H.O. Ireland, 62. Documents quoted from other archives have been identified numerically where it has been possible to do so. Except where otherwise stated Dublin Castle MSS. denotes the collection of State Papers known as the Rebellion Papers and preserved in the Record Tower, Dublin Castle.

In the majority of documents used by me spelling and punctuation have been altered to suit modern requirements.

H. MONTGOMERY HYDE.

MIDDLE TEMPLE, *February*, 1933.

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‘Ireland will never forget the statesman of the legislative Union.’

From the inscription on the tomb of Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh and second Marquess of Londonderry, in Westminster Abbey.

‘The demons of the present day are at work to make those who carried the Union odious ; as first having cruelly oppressed, and then sold their country. The world’s forgetfulness of the events which are a few years gone by enable them to mislead numbers. . . . I feel confident that the intentions of government for the public good at that time will bear the strictest scrutiny. . . . I believe their measures, when fairly explained, will stand equally the test of criticism, and that they may be shown to have combined humanity with vigour of administration when that had to watch over the preservation of the State ; whilst in the conduct of the Union they pursued honestly the interests of Ireland, yielding not more to private interests than was requisite to disarm so mighty a change of any convulsive character.’

From a letter written by Viscount Castlereagh to Alexander Knox, Esquire, March 30, 1811 : A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 539.

‘With respect to Ireland, I know I never shall be forgiven. I have with many others incurred the inexpiable guilt of preserving that main branch of the British Empire from that separation which the traitors of Ireland in conjunction with a foreign power had meditated. . . . My conduct has been the constant theme of invective. But I think those who are acquainted with me will do me the justice to believe that I never had a cruel or an unkind heart.’

From a speech delivered by Viscount Castlereagh in the British House of Commons, July 11, 1817 : Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xxxvi. 1406.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are few characters in British history that have been treated with more unmerited hatred than that of Castlereagh. As a diplomatist he has been considered shortsighted, as an administrator reactionary, and as the author of a great legislative achievement of imperial consolidation frankly a traitor. No man has possibly been more reviled by his fellow-countrymen than the author of the Act of Union. On the first public occasion after his death on which a toast was proposed to his memory, a would-be patriot protested with the exclamation : ' As an Irishman I shall never, if I can help it, suffer the name of Castlereagh or Londonderry to be mentioned but with disgrace and infamy.'¹ The tradition of ' Bloody Castlereagh,' the arch-fiend who was in league with the spirits of Macchiavelli and the Marquis de Sade, lingers still in the land of his birth.

In Ireland extremes have a habit of meeting with a more resounding concussion than in most other parts of the world. The number of saints and heroes which this small island of emotional complexes has produced is admittedly large. Yet one cannot help noticing the cynical expression worn by many in this inspiring series of idealists, as from their niches in the national valhalla they look down scornfully upon the equally large if less imposing array of tyrants and traitors who grovel in the outer darkness of political unreason. Strange as it must doubtless appear to those of exclusive Anglo-Saxon sympathies and culture, the popular outcasts have invariably formed the bulwarks of constituted authority within the Kingdom, against which their honoured opponents have striven for successive generations, though not always with that distinction or success to which they have considered that the purity of their intentions and the nobility of their

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, August 28, 1822.

cause have entitled them. Now and then, of course, there has occurred a bewildering interchange of interests and objects. Thus, even the best-hated man in Ireland has sometimes become at a later stage in his career a popular idol. Such a happy experience as this might indeed have befallen Castlereagh had he been a man of baser ideals and less sincere principles. He preferred instead to plough the lonely furrow of misunderstanding and vituperation, the reward of one whose only offence had been to preserve his country from the dangers of a separation which bade fair to ruin it and the empire of which it still forms an essential part.

The early period of Castlereagh's life (1769-1802), which forms the subject of the present volume, must be regarded as more than one of mere political apprenticeship. Thrust into the turbulent arena of party strife at an early age, even for his times, he reached, through a happy combination of chance and ability, a position of supreme political authority in Ireland before he was thirty years old. In spite of the handicap of youth and a boyish appearance, with which indeed he was continually reproached by both friends and enemies, he put to the utmost use his natural talents ; his family and social connections ; and a general knowledge of the country gained in Parliament, on active military service, and through close association with the tenantry of several large estates. He was thereby enabled to weather successfully the storm of republican sentiment which burst over the Kingdom, and subsequently to provide the most effectual and statesmanlike remedy which has yet been directed towards the solution of the Irish problem. No Englishman could have accomplished this task with the thoroughness and understanding that he displayed. That it should have produced national disappointment and discontent instead of national regeneration and reconstruction was due not to the fault of its author, but to the insuperable barrier of King George III's conscience, which rendered possible the completion of only half his legislative programme. Castlereagh became the scapegoat of this unfortunate compromise ; and, from the time of the passing of the Act of Union until his death twenty-two years later, he was persecuted in the press and on the platform with a ferocity which would astonish a modern electorate. The combination against ' the power of the dog ' was truly formidable

—Brougham and the Whig writers in the *Edinburgh Review*; Cobbett, Burdett and the radicals; the Canningites; the Grenville pamphleteers; republicans like Finnerty, O'Connor and MacNevin; and a host of vulgar rhymsters, many of whom preserved their anonymity, but to whose level poets like Byron, Moore and Shelley descended—and it was a combination which no human reputation could withstand. Thus began the legend of the 'Robespierre of Ireland,' *the villain who 'has left a memory that smells of hot blood.'*¹

Nor did the impure breath of scandal leave his private life untouched. His childlessness in an age of prolific paternity caused the indecorous wagging of many tongues, and on one memorable occasion a political opponent had the audacity to taunt him with *impuissance* to his face and before the assembled legislators at College Green.² By some his name was coupled in leering undertones with that of a private secretary, for whom he was suspected of entertaining more than an ordinary affection.³ Other gossips, adopting a different tack, credited him with the possession of a mistress, the daughter of a lobster-catcher to his father, whom he was supposed to maintain luxuriously on an island in Strangford Lough. 'One pledge of affection,' it is said, 'was the consequence of their intimacy'—a boy who ultimately became a Commander in the Royal Navy, 'to which rank he rose not from the influence of his father, but from his own personal merit,' after cutting out a French poleacre of ten guns under a heavy battery.⁴ It is to be regretted that this and other fictitious affairs of gallantry in the neighbourhood of County Down should have been accepted without question by two recognised authorities on the Continent.⁵ But he suffered from even more damaging rumours than these. It was whispered at the time of his suicide that he was being blackmailed, and that the pressure exerted by

¹ R. R. Madden, *The United Irishmen*, i. 353 (2nd ed.).

² See below, p. 298.

³ Alexander Knox. See below, pp. 224 *et seq.*

⁴ *The Observer*, Aug. 18, 1822. (Reprinted from an interesting and exceedingly rare pamphlet by Felton Reede, entitled *The Private Life and Character of the Marquis of Londonderry*, published in London in 1822.) Disproved by the historian James Stuart in *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 27, 1822.

⁵ De Capefigue, *Diplomates Européens*, i. *passim* (Paris, 1839); *Biographie Universelle*, iv. 178 (Paris, 1844). See also *Cast. Corr.* i. 139.

the blackmailers upon their victim, having become intolerable, was the immediate cause of his temporary loss of reason. The informer Tom Reynolds was long believed to have had the principal hand in the alleged blackmailing, but it has now been definitely ascertained that this individual's importunities referred solely to his official services during the Rebellion of '98 and to the supposed inadequate manner in which these services had been rewarded.¹ According to another and more distressing version of the story Castlereagh fell into a cunningly contrived trap ; and having been discovered apparently 'about to commit an act from which nature shrinks in horror,' he vainly endeavoured to seal the lips of his accusers with gold. 'Day after day did these miscreants station themselves by the iron railings with which the enclosure of St. James's Square is surrounded, opposite the windows of the residence of the Marquess, and take the opportunity by signs and motions whenever he appeared to let him know that they had not yet forgotten the scene which they had contrived. Driven almost to distraction by this persecution, he made known his case with all the circumstances to the late Duke of Wellington and to another nobleman. By them he was advised to give the wretches into custody at once, avow the full facts, and extricate himself from further disgusting thralldom. He had not the resolution to follow this advice. He shrank from the consequences which the painful disclosure might produce on the feelings of his wife ; and in a moment of distraction adopted the desperate remedy which was to extricate him from his persecutors and himself.'²

It seems unnecessary to state that there never was the slightest foundation in fact for any of these absurd reports ; and, if at one time they gained a surprisingly wide circulation, it affords some satisfaction to know that they have now been completely discredited if not forgotten.

One would think perhaps that the man who lost neither the affection of Charlemont nor the respect of Grattan could scarcely

¹ T. Reynolds, *Life of Thomas Reynolds*, ii. 444 *et seq.* W. J. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service under Pitt*, ch. xx.

² J. Richardson, *Recollections, Political, Literary, Dramatic, and Miscellaneous of the Last Half Century*, ii. 285-288 (London, 1855). Creevey *Papers*, ii. 41 (ed. Sir H. Maxwell). H. Grattan, *Life of Henry Grattan*, v. 172.

be the bloody villain who has been so frequently represented as having first cruelly oppressed and then sold his country.¹ Unfortunately it cannot be said that the cheers which followed Castlereagh's coffin to his grave in Westminster Abbey have as yet quite died out of hearing ; for in spite of the rehabilitation of his private character, there still seems to be a general tendency to regard him as *par excellence* the gentleman of uneasy political virtue. Judged by local conditions and contemporary standards of public morality, however, the means whereby he accomplished his political objects in Ireland can even now stand the test of every well-reasoned criticism. The opening of channels of information to which the student was until recently denied access has done much to dissipate the black cloud thrown round his name by partisan fancy, and has at the same time both clarified and simplified the task from which the historian of the last century shrank with a laudable sense of delicacy.² 'By dint of repeating a set of cant phrases which, when examined, have neither sense nor truth,' wrote Sir Walter Scott a few years after his death, 'a grand effort has been made to blind the British public as to the nature of the important services which he rendered to his country, and the truth of history has in no case been so encroached on to serve the purposes of party.'³ To-day history still delays in doing him full justice ; but the signs of the times are more hopeful than when Scott wrote amid the backwash of the Six Acts and the hungry twenties, and if he does not, like St. Joan, ultimately enjoy a popular as well as an ecclesiastical canonisation, it seems certain that at least he will be rescued from historical perdition.

I

Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh (by courtesy) and subsequently second Marquess of Londonderry, was descended from an ancient Scottish family whose members lived in the Western

¹ See below, p. 442.

² The late Lord Salisbury, who ranked himself as a panegyrist of Castlereagh, confessed that he preferred 'to dwell on any other display of ability than that which consists of bribing knaves into honesty and fools into common sense.' *Quarterly Review*, cxi. 204 (Jan. 1862).

³ Sir W. Scott to Rev. S. M. Turner, Oct. 27, 1827: *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 103.

Lowlands.¹ Sir William Stewart, Laird of Garlies, is understood to have been the common ancestor of the noble families of Lennox, Galloway, and Londonderry.² He was one of the most prominent Scotsmen in the fourteenth century, and fought gallantly to expel the English from his country. He is mentioned by Froissart as one of Lord Douglas's Captains at the Battle of Otterburn in 1388.³ He was captured at Homildon Hill in 1402, and was cruelly put to death by 'Hotspur' Percy, who, to gratify a private grudge, exposed his mangled limbs on the gates of York. His great-grandson, Sir Thomas Stewart, became Laird of Minto, and it was his descendants who founded the family fortunes in Ireland.⁴

In the plantation of Ulster by James I, himself a Stewart, extensive provision was made in the county of Donegal for his kinsmen and supporters. Between Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly there lay a neat estate of 1,000 acres, called Ballylawn (or Ballyneigh), which was first given to an undertaker named Alexander Macaulay.⁵ Like many of his contemporaries, who from inability or disinclination never visited their plantation lands, Alexander Macaulay soon found that his estate had been seized by a powerful neighbour. As this neighbour happened to be the

¹ For the following genealogical details I have derived great assistance from an MS. account of the Stewart family compiled by the Rev. Samuel Stone, Rector of Culdaff, Co. Donegal, and cousin of the 1st Marquess of Londonderry (at present in the possession of Miss Stone), and to a similar MS. by James Patterson, the 1st Marquess's land agent in Donegal (now in the Londonderry Estate Office, Newtownards). These MSS. were written in the years 1788 and 1789 respectively, at the request of the 1st Marquess, by whom they were used in certifying his pedigree, which the College of Heralds in Dublin required to be registered on the occasion of his elevation to the peerage. A précis of the Stone MS. will be found in J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, iii. 397, 611-614 (London, 1853). I have also consulted MS. 'Memorials of the Ancestry of Frederick William Robert Stewart, fourth Marquess of Londonderry,' compiled by Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster King-at-Arms, in 1857, and duly recorded in the Office of Arms, Dublin Castle. A copy of this MS. is preserved at Mount Stewart.

² *The Scots Peerage*, iv. 148 (ed. J. B. Paul).

³ Froissart, *Chronicles*, iii. 730.

⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1822 (ed. James Stuart); *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 1; Burke's *Peerage*, 695 (ed. 1865).

⁵ July 16, 1610. This undertaker was also known by the surname of Stewart, which, it is significant, was borne by the other principal grantees in the neighbourhood. G. Hill, *Plantation in Ulster*, 293-4.

High Sheriff of the County, a certain Sir Ralph Bingley, the dispossessed tenant was reluctantly compelled to go to law about it. He soon tired of the prolonged litigation which followed, and to rid himself of further embarrassment he wisely sold the disputed estate to a relative. The name of the purchaser was Alexander Stewart, and he was lineally descended from Sir Thomas Stewart, Laird of Minto. It is probable that Alexander Stewart did not visit the lands either, but he is known to have continued the suit with the High Sheriff, a process which was only terminated by the death of the parties. Their successors were preparing to renew the contest, when the King interfered and ordered his Deputy to terminate the case as seemed best to him. The result was the issue of letters of denisation to Alexander's son, John, and the final grant to him of the estate.¹ John Stewart, who now settled with a number of Scotch tenants at Ballylawn, built a castle on the estate, which he called Stewart's Court, and exercised the manorial rights of free fishing in Lough Swilly and holding a court baron. He died towards the middle of the seventeenth century, and his immediate descendants, displaying all the vigour and obstinacy which distinguishes the Ulster Scot, succeeded in acquiring a position of considerable means and importance for themselves.²

John Stewart's great-grandson, William, was noted for his conspicuous bravery as an officer in the field.³ While yet in his twenties he raised a troop of horse at his own expense for his namesake Dutch William 'of pious, blessed, and immortal memory,' and when the apprentice lads of Derry closed the gates of the city for its memorable siege, William Stewart and his cavalry contrived to cut off a large section of the enemy's supplies and in other ways hindered the operations of the besieging force.

¹ The original patent, which is preserved in the Londonderry Estate Office at Newtownards, is dated 'the 9th day of May in the fifth year of the reign of King Charles I' (1629). It describes the grantee as 'Johannes Stewart armiger, in nostro regnae Scotiae natus.' The estate was to be held as of the Castle of Dublin in free and common socage. The official entry will be found in the printed *Calendar of Irish Patent and Close Rolls for the Reign of Charles I* at p. 153. It appears that the dispossession of Alexander Macaulay was due to his refusal to 'qualify' for the grant by taking the Oath of Supremacy: 'Ancestry Memorials' MS.

² See Appendix I for pedigree.

³ Great-grandfather of Castlereagh.

For this achievement he was attainted and his estates declared forfeit at the Parliament held by James II in Dublin, but that monarch's signal defeat and flight by the Boyne water fortunately prevented the sentence from being carried into effect. His sister Anne, who had married an alderman of the city, distinguished herself in a different but no less deserving manner. The siege, which lasted for over four months, inflicted the most terrible suffering upon the inhabitants, whom in its early stages it reduced to the verge of starvation. This lady had a favourite grey horse, which the rest of her family demanded should be killed and used to relieve the scantiness of their table. But true to the local tradition she refused to surrender the animal for this purpose, and it is said that she managed to have it hidden and fed with hay during the whole of the siege—no mean feat when rats, dung, and even human flesh were being eagerly devoured by the famished citizens. As for William's gallant troop, it was incorporated with a regiment of dragoons commanded by Lord Mountjoy, and their leader was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. As a crowning distinction William won the hand of my Lord Mountjoy's fair cousin. His portrait, which can be seen at Mount Stewart, reveals a man of the most handsome features and courageous bearing, clad in shining armour. He lived in arms and he died in arms. He was killed in a duel with a fellow-officer. The cause of this meeting is not known ; it was probably not the first episode of its kind in which he had acted as a principal.¹

Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart had two sons, Thomas and Alexander. The elder, Thomas, succeeded to Ballylawn and became a Captain in a Grenadier Company. Unlike his father he was a Tory and a High Churchman, and he expressed his sentiments towards the Hanoverian monarchy by resigning his commission on the accession of George I to the English throne. He was a high-spirited cavalier, quick to take offence, but good-natured, and one who entertained a liking for all sorts of society. When a well-known citizen of Derry named Andrews² was sentenced to the pillory for having spoken disrespectfully of the government of

¹ Stone MS. ; Reid, *op. cit.* iii. 613.

² This man was father of Dr. Francis Andrews, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, 1759-1774 ; Stone MS.

the new sovereign, Captain Stewart, sword in hand, stood near him to protect him from the fury of the mob as he underwent his punishment. He preferred the maiden city to Ballylawn as a place of residence, and he maintained the cavalier tradition of hospitality by living so much beyond his means that he was compelled to sell a portion of his lands in Donegal. Though married he had no children, and his wife seems to have been as much concerned as himself in the dissipation of his inheritance. He died about the year 1731, and Madam Stewart, who was not content with the income from her jointure, claimed the remainder of the Ballylawn estate by virtue of a separate deed which she had persuaded her late husband to execute in her favour. This claim was opposed by the deceased man's younger brother, Alexander, as well as the Ballylawn tenants with whom she was unpopular, and they kept her out of possession. She thereupon brought an action against her brother-in-law, and might have won it, since she was supported by her own brother on the bench,¹ had she not suddenly died pending the suit.

2

Alexander Stewart, Castlereagh's paternal grandfather, was born at Ballylawn in 1700. He was educated in Derry, where as a boarder he attended the diocesan school. On leaving this institution he was bound apprentice to a prominent Belfast merchant, and he later established himself in business, in which connection he visited France and Flanders. He evidently showed early signs of intelligence and reliability, for while still under age he was appointed an executor under the will of his brother-in-law and the guardian of the testator's children.² During his residence in Belfast he became a convinced Whig and an elder in the first Presbyterian congregation of that city, thus strangely differing from the political and religious sentiments of his brother. On succeeding to the Ballylawn estate, which at the time of his brother's death yielded about £400 a year, he

¹ Michael Ward, Judge of the Court of King's Bench in Ireland, father of 1st Viscount Bangor.

² John Kennedy of Cultra married Alexander Stewart's sister, Martha. See Appendix I.

retired from business and shortly afterwards removed to London. Here he made the acquaintance of an amiable cousin called Mary Cowan, and as she was a Derry Alderman's daughter and an heiress to boot, he married her.

Mary Cowan presented her husband with a fortune and eight children. The circumstances in which the former was acquired deserve notice. She had an elder half-brother, Robert, who entered the service of the East India Company. As the reward for executing some delicate negotiations on the Company's behalf the Court of Directors appointed Robert Cowan to the Governorship of Bombay, an office which he held beyond the usual term.¹ Returning to London in 1736 with about £100,000, which he had accumulated in the discharge of his proconsular duties, he was knighted for his public services and became a member of Parliament.² A few weeks after his election he gave a dinner party to some friends. While sitting at table he was suddenly taken ill, and he retired to his room, leaving Alexander Stewart, who happened to be one of the guests, to entertain the others. Physicians were immediately summoned, but they could do nothing for him, except diagnose his malady as quinsy. Not many days later Sir Robert Cowan died. His estate, which was vested in trustees in remainder, passed under his will to his half-sister Mary as the sole surviving member of the family, though according to the actual terms of the will she had only a contingent interest in the property.³ As she was barely out of her 'teens and as yet unmarried, the heirs to the remainder, who were astute city merchants, opposed her claim in the Chancery Court. Her marriage to Alexander Stewart, which took place shortly

¹ Sir Robert Cowan's papers are preserved in the Londonderry Estate Office at Newtownards; they include logs of his journeys, diaries, account books, and memoranda of his correspondence in India.

² M.P. for Treigny Borough, 1737, Feb. 9-March 2: *Returns of Members of Parliament*, ii. 73.

³ Had the fortune consisted of real instead of personal estate, it would have gone to the heir of a remote ancestor of the whole blood, and not to a sister of the half-blood. It is said that Sir Robert Cowan intended to convert his fortune into realty and died before the necessary deeds could be completed. The heir-at-law who would have succeeded in this event was such a distant relation as to be totally unknown to the family in Ireland. The vested remainderman named in the will was a brother, William, who died in India about the same time as the testator: Stone MS. See Appendix I.

afterwards,¹ enabled the latter to bring to a successful issue a case which otherwise might have dragged on for years and swallowed up most of the estate. As it was, the suit proved extremely vexatious, and was complicated by the bankruptcy of one of the trustees, who fled to France, whither Alexander pursued him in order to obtain security for the right of possession. The merchants also gave him a deal of trouble ; and although he took steps to defeat their contingent remainder, they had ultimately to be bought off with a money payment before consenting to waive their claims and permit quiet possession of the estate.²

The trustees of the marriage settlement agreed that the Cowan fortune might in part or in whole be laid out in the purchase of real estate, and Alexander Stewart accordingly decided to apply it in the north of Ireland. Someone told him that there were two attractive manor residences for sale in County Down, by name Comber and Newtownards, and without more ado he bought them from their impecunious owner, Robert Colville. This transaction took place in London in the year 1744.³ The Newtownards estate included the demesne land of Mount Pleasant, which he renamed Mount Stewart. The sale of this latter estate was attended by strange and important consequences for the electoral system of Ireland. When the deeds of conveyance had been executed, it was found that they did not include the vendor's interest in the local borough. Newtownards was a corporation borough—that is to say, its parliamentary representatives in Dublin were chosen by burgesses under the control of the local landed proprietor. Robert Colville now proposed to transfer his influence over these persons for the modest sum of £500, which he offered to the purchaser in the shape of a conveyance of arrears of rent on the estate, but Alexander Stewart, 'supposing it impossible that the borough should not necessarily fall into the hands of him who possessed the estate,'

¹ They were married in Dublin (June 30, 1737) at the house of Major Stone (father of the author of Stone MS. *supra cit.*). One of the trustees of the marriage settlement was Hugh Henry, the noted Dublin banker : Stone MS.

² Although Alexander Stewart executed a disentailing assurance and resettled the property, the contingent remaindermen each received £2,000 : Stone MS.

³ Manor of Comber, Articles of Purchase (July 9, 1744) : Manor of Newton, Articles of Purchase (Sept. 20, 1744) : Estate Office MSS.

refused the offer.¹ Robert Colville thereupon disposed of the borough to his kinsman, the Hon. John Ponsonby, who was head of the Irish Revenue Board. Ponsonby's father, the Earl of Bessborough, had at one time coveted the estate for himself and may still have done so. Had Alexander Stewart visited Newtownards at the time of the execution of this conveyance it is probable that he could have defeated Ponsonby's interest in the corporation, since most of the burgesses were amongst his new tenants. But Ponsonby, who was on the spot, proceeded to bribe them with sums of money and places in the Revenue Department to vacate their seats, which he immediately filled with subservient non-residents.²

Alexander Stewart forthwith applied to the Court of King's Bench for a writ of Quo Warranto to oust the non-residents, and he would doubtless have obtained it, had not Ponsonby in the meantime procured the passage of a bill through Parliament legalising non-resident burgesses—'the most outrageous and unconstitutional act that ever was enacted,' declared the patriotic Lord Charlemont. 'Residence had till now been deemed necessary to electors, but by this law—which, as proof of its source in private interest, was impudently termed the Newtownards Act³—all residence was dispensed with; and in consequence burgesses were elected resident in parts of Ireland the most distant from the borough, who in days of election were sent down to vote either for members or for magistrates, and thus the borough was firmly placed in the hands of its new purchaser, though possessed of neither estate nor interest in the county, to the utter exclusion of the town and its vicinity, and consequently Mr. Stewart by whose land it was surrounded.'⁴ The Act, however, did not pass without opposition. Whilst it was in Committee a petition arrived from Alexander Stewart on behalf of himself and the inhabitants of Newtownards, praying to be heard against it by

¹ Charlemont, 'Memoir of his Political Life': *Charlemont Correspondence*, i. 111. The proposed price of the borough has been alternatively fixed at £1,100: Stone MS.

² Only four burgesses supported Alexander Stewart, and when they died their places were filled by Ponsonby's friends: Stone MS.

³ 21 Geo. II, C. 10 (Ir.), 1748.

⁴ *Charl. Corr.* i. 111. See also an interesting pamphlet by 'Falkland' (Rev. J. R. Scott) on the *Parliamentary Representation of Ireland* (Dublin, 1790), at p. 29.

Counsel. But the combined influence of the borough owners was too strong for the suppliant, and the petition was dismissed.¹ When the bill had been transmitted to England for the approval of the Privy Council, Alexander Stewart appeared before this body at St. James's and opposed the obnoxious measure in person. His praiseworthy efforts were to no purpose. The bill became law. The result was that from 1748 till the Union non-resident burgesses were the rule in the smaller boroughs, and the inhabitants therefore only saw their municipal rulers on the comparatively rare occasions of a parliamentary election or the death of a sovereign.²

What he lost in political influence in Newtownards, Alexander Stewart made up in the social improvements which he effected as a resident landlord. The town, which lies on the northern shores of Lough Strangford, was founded by Sir Hugh Montgomery, and had been incorporated by James I with the other plantation colonies.³ Unfortunately its early prosperity declined along with the fortunes of its founder's descendants.⁴ Gone were the days when claret flowed 'from the spouts of the market cross, caught in hats and bowls by who cou'd or wou'd . . . and good fellows [were] increasing their mirth and joy by good liquor.'⁵ During the early years of the eighteenth century when penal legislation depressed Dissenters and Catholics alike, its condition grew so bad that when the new landlord arrived in the year 1745

¹ *House of Commons Journals (Ireland)*, iv. 545.

² A. and E. Porritt, *Unreformed House of Commons*, ii. 305. The borough of Newtownards was in turn sold by the Ponsonby family in 1787 to James Alexander (later 1st Earl of Caledon). A visitor has described the advent of the new proprietor: 'We dined at Newtownards, and the same day Nabob Alexander was entertaining, under the nose of the Stewarts, his burgesses for the borough for which he paid £10,000': Mrs. McTier to W. Drennan, July 1787: *Drennan Letters*, 237. On the Parliamentary disenfranchisement of the borough by the Act of Union, Lord Caledon received £15,000 as compensation for the loss of the representation. Shortly afterwards he exchanged the municipal rights for those of Newtown Limavady, which were owned by Lord Londonderry.

³ Down Ordinance Survey MSS. (in Royal Irish Academy). On the origin and growth of Newtownards, see also an article by J. Vinycomb on 'The Corporate Towns of Ulster' in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, iv. 24 (Oct. 1897).

⁴ Earls of Mount Alexander, see below, p. 27.

⁵ G. Hill, *Montgomery Manuscripts* (Belfast, 1869), p. 178.

there were not more than three good slate houses in it.¹ Alexander Stewart therefore erected a large Market House, and laid out an extensive square in front for a new market place, building also neat rows of houses in the adjacent streets. Although the style of architecture which he favoured may fall short of modern aesthetic standards, these houses of one and two storeys were the reverse of jerry-built, and served a fitter purpose than the miserable cottages in which his tenants had hitherto dwelt. The house which he constructed for himself was so strong that in the following century it was used as a factory.² In less than twenty years two hundred new houses sprang up under his auspices, while the income from the two estates had doubled. He was thus enabled to extend his purchases in the north, and also to acquire some valuable property in Dublin.³ His town house, which he was in the habit of visiting during the parliamentary season, he filled with the best china, plate, wine, pictures and books. He collected about a hundred really fine paintings, which included a large Nativity by Rubens and a magnificent Transfiguration by Carlo Muratti.⁴ The citizens of Derry did him the honour of electing him to represent them, and it was their misfortune as much as his that he was shortly afterwards unseated on petition.⁵

It is said that every family has a skeleton in its ancestral cupboard, and in the case of Castlereagh's attempts have been made to find it in his grandfather. If the genial and honest gaze with which Alexander Stewart looks down upon posterity from his portrait does not disarm such unfriendly criticism, we may turn

¹ Stone MS.

² This house, which is situated at the south end of High Street facing the Market Cross, is now the Londonderry Estate Office.

³ Kilrea and Magherafelt (Co. Derry) and Mary Mount (Co. Down) were purchased in 1752 : Stone MS. The Dublin property consisted of four houses and offices in Henry Street, and were purchased from Sir Ralph Gore (later Earl of Ross), June 29, 1747 : *Registry of Deeds*, Dublin.

⁴ R. Twiss, *A Tour in Ireland in 1775* (Dublin, 1777), p. 26. Mrs. Delany was so impressed by the Muratti that she borrowed it to copy in 1752 : *Autobiography of Mrs. Delany*, iii. 130.

⁵ He was elected M.P. for Londonderry in March 1760, and two months later was unseated on the petition of the unsuccessful candidate, who complained of bribery, corruption, and the mayor's partiality in admitting unqualified voters to the poll. There is no proof that the alleged practices took place (if at all) with Stewart's knowledge : Colby, *Ordinance Survey of the County of Londonderry*, 83.

to the testimony of one who knew him as 'a man of polite and pleasing manners, a clear and comprehensive understanding and principles truly liberal in politics and religion.' 'It is true,' continues this authority, 'he had no small share of ambition; but it was an ambition to raise his family to honour and influence in his country for his country's good.'¹ He died at Newtownards in his eighty-second year, bequeathing his children an extensive inheritance and an excellent example of living.² Of these children three died in infancy, two became respectable spinsters, one was drowned in the Clyde whilst attending the University of Glasgow, one became a landowner and founded a well-known family in Donegal, and one (the eldest) achieved the almost unparalleled distinction of being advanced from the rank of a Commoner to that of a Marquess within his lifetime.³

3

Alexander Stewart's eldest son was called Robert.⁴ He was born in London in the year 1739;⁵ and he died first Marquess of Londonderry at Mount Stewart in the year 1821.⁶ Though his paternity is now beyond dispute, the belief was at one time current in County Down that he was the son of a humble post courier named McGregor; there were rumours, too, of an even more discreditable origin, but such tales were commonly invented during election campaigns.⁷ Like his younger brothers, Robert

¹ W. Steele Dickson, *Narrative of Confinement and Exile*, 6-7 (ed. 1812).

² *Belfast News-Letter*, April 24, 1781; *Cast. Corr.* i. 3.

³ See below, Appendix I.

⁴ Dublin Castle MSS. (Lords' Entries, Office of Arms); Stone MS.

⁵ Probably at his father's town house in Argyle Buildings, Westminster.

⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine*, xci. pt. i. at p. 373 (April 1821).

⁷ See the political squib book, *County Down Election, 1805. The Patriotic Miscellany or Mirror of Wit, Genius and Wisdom, Being a Correct Collection of all the Publications during the late contested election between the Hon. Colonel Charles Meade and the Rt. Hon. Lord Viscount Castlereagh* (London, 1805), *passim*. See also F. Reede, *The Private Life and Character of the Marquis of Londonderry* (London, 1822), pp. 4-5. The story that his father was a pedlar 'who came from Scotland with a pack on his back' is repeated in *The Farington Diary*, i. 242 (ed. Greig). See too G. E. C. *Complete Peerage*, viii. 110.

was brought up a good Calvinist, and thus escaped the temptations of Oxford and similar academic strongholds of the Established Church. His father sent him under the care of a tutor to the University of Geneva, where he studied 'literature,' and whence he later made the Grand Tour, visiting Italy and 'some of the other polite courts of Europe.'¹ He returned home about the year 1762, when he had the good sense to fall in love with the daughter of a powerful if somewhat greedy landowner and borough proprietor in the north of Ireland. The recipient of his attentions could not have been more happily chosen. She was a beautiful and talented girl of eighteen, called Lady Sarah Seymour-Conway, and her father, who owned considerable property in the neighbourhood of Lisburn, was the Earl of Hertford.² Lord Hertford was connected by blood with the ducal family of Somerset, while his wife was a sister of the Duke of Grafton, who distinguished himself in the *Letters of Junius* and in the history of the turf. In 1765 Lord Hertford was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and Robert Stewart attended the viceregal court, where he continued to press for the hand of his excellency's daughter. Having finally satisfied himself as to means and position of the suitor, Lord Hertford gave his consent to the union; and the marriage took place with fitting ceremony in the Chapel Royal of Dublin Castle.³ Being unwilling at first to desert the social splendour of the capital for the less attractive if more economical activities of the northern squirearchy, the young couple borrowed a spacious house belonging to the bridegroom's father in the fashionable quarter of the city,⁴ and here they settled down to what proved to be only too brief a period of conjugal happiness. Their first child, Alexander, died when he was scarcely a year old;⁵ but as an example of a divine compensation in the days of high infantile mortality, a second son

¹ Stone MS.

² Francis Seymour-Conway, Marquess of Hertford (1719-1794). Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Aug. 1765 to Sept. 1766. The annual value of his Irish estates has been computed at £15,000: *Complete Peerage*, vi. 512.

³ June 3, 1766. For details see 'Parish Register of St. Werburgh': *Parish Register Society of Dublin*, xii. 133.

⁴ Then known as No. 28 Henry Street. See below, p. 35.

⁵ Alexander Francis Stewart. Born June 28, 1768. Died June 1769: Strand St. Presbyterian Congregation Baptism Register MS.

appeared in the very month that the death of their first-born was announced.¹ They called him Robert after his father—as Castle-reagh he was destined to make his name the best known and best hated of his times in Britain. Before the end of the year Lady Sarah Stewart announced that she again expected to become a mother, but when she had come to the full period of her pregnancy, an inexplicable physical complication occurred and she died with the child unborn. She was then but two and twenty years of age, ‘admired for her fine person and accomplishments,’ as a contemporary remarked, ‘and beloved for the unaffected goodness of her mind and manners.’²

Though he was shortly to marry again, the bereaved widower first sought to distract his attention by turning to politics, and in the year following his wife’s death he entered the Irish House of Commons as member for County Down. He was returned by the ‘independent’ or ‘county’ interest backed by the local Whigs and Dissenters, as opposed to the ‘official’ or ‘court’ interest of the Hill family which received the support of the Tories and High Churchmen. On account of his strong position both at St. James’s and Dublin Castle, the titular head of this family, the Earl of Hillsborough,³ wielded the greatest influence in the county; he was one of His Majesty’s principal Secretaries of State, he was the absolute proprietor of six boroughs and exercised a considerable degree of control over another twelve, he was Lord-Lieutenant of the county as well as its wealthiest landowner, and he had most of the local gentry under some degree of obligation to himself by reason of his having obtained, or promised to obtain, for their younger sons suitable employment in the army, navy, church or civil service. This political triumph over the interests of a family which had hitherto returned both county members to College Green formed the prelude of a long struggle between two leading territorial representatives in Ulster.

¹ See below, p. 35.

² Stone MS. Lady Sarah Stewart died at 28 Henry Street, Dublin, on July 17, 1770, and was buried in the Stewart family vault in the Priory Church, Newtownards: Lodge’s *Peerage of Ireland*, vii. 38.

³ Wills Hill, Earl of Hillsborough and later 1st Marquess of Downshire (1718-1793), was the first to hold the office of Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1768-1772. The richest landowner in Ireland (except Lord Donegall and Thomas Conolly).

Robert Stewart's present success was largely due to the sudden popular sympathy with John Wilkes and the discontented American colonists, and to the growing feelings in favour of constitutional and parliamentary reform which found expression in the Volunteer movement.

If Robert Stewart acquired a reputation for sagacity and shrewdness in Parliament, he was, in the words of Charlemont (and Charlemont knew him from the first Volunteering days), 'a gentleman of the best character and the most patriotic principles.'¹ In fact he proved one of the most consistent antagonists of 'administration,' invariably voting and sometimes speaking for the Opposition in the House. On one occasion with true Ulster-Scottish zeal he proposed a resolution to the effect that during the past fifteen years the expenditure of the kingdom had exceeded its income, and he made this proposition so manifest that the Prime Serjeant who led for the Government declared that he could not oppose it.² It is noteworthy that his patriotic motion was supported by a young man named Henry Grattan in a speech which was the first to bring its author into public prominence.³ The early political conduct of Robert Stewart evidently won the approval of his constituents, for it is recorded that they once entertained him to dinner in Belfast when no less than fifty-four toasts were drunk. The sentiments of the diners, which were as liberal in quality as in quantity, included 'The memory of John Hampden,' 'All those who would rather die in jack-boots than live in wooden shoes,' and 'Disappointment to those who cry out against tumults, yet would avail themselves of them to establish their very worst consequences—Despotism.'⁴

It is said that during Lord Shelburne's ministry in 1782 Robert Stewart refused a peerage 'as an inferior honour to representing the county of Down,' professing himself satisfied

¹ *Charl. Corr.* i. 111. In a remarkable analysis of the Irish Parliament in 1775, believed to have been made by Sir John Blaquiére (then Chief Secretary), the following entry appears against Robert Stewart's name: 'always against.' W. Hunt, *The Irish Parliament, 1775*, 48 (London, 1807).

² Lord Buckinghamshire to Lord G. Germaine, Feb. 20, 1778: Buckinghamshire MSS. (B.M. A 33, 34, 523). G.E.C. *Complete Peerage*, viii, 110.

³ Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 1-13.

⁴ H. Joy, *Historical Collections relative to the Town of Belfast*, 115-117.

with the additional local distinction of a seat at the Linen Board.¹ He had very soon occasion to repent that he had not accepted this noble offer, when at the general election in the following year his devotion to the interests of his constituents did not receive the recognition that it manifestly deserved. In Down the Hillsborough triumph was complete, but the means employed to obtain it were questioned in the most disinterested quarters. 'Though for the most part honest men were returned by the counties,' wrote Lord Charlemont, 'in too many cases influence and even money prevailed to the disgrace of the constituents, and to the exclusion of gentlemen of the best and most experienced principles. . . . Colonel Robert Stewart, whose honesty was almost proverbial, was defeated in Down by Lord Kilwarlin, of whose political demerits it is enough to say that he was son to the Earl of Hillsborough.'² Kilwarlin and his friends were said to have prevailed upon the presiding officer to close the poll prematurely, with the knowledge that a considerable number of his opponent's supporters who had been delayed by stormy weather were on their way to Downpatrick to register their votes.³ Although the defeated candidate actually challenged the returns at the bar of the House, the Hillsborough influence was able to procure the dismissal of his petition with costs.⁴ Robert Stewart, therefore, found himself out of Parliament.

Whilst member for County Down, Robert Stewart had again felt the need of domestic consolation, and he was fortunate enough to find it in the person of the Honourable Frances Pratt, whom he married in 1775. The charm and beauty of this lady, who was the eldest daughter of Lord Camden, have been generally acknowledged, and for a while she moved in that strange masonic band known as 'society.' A few years after her marriage she fell a victim to a 'melancholy adventure' which altered the whole

¹ McTier to Drennan, Aug. 1783 : *Drennan Letters*, 93. *Cast. Corr.* i. 3. The Linen Board was founded in 1711, and the great expansion and prosperity of the linen industry towards the end of the century was principally due to the work of this body.

² *Charl. Corr.* i. 24.

³ *An Historical Account of the late Election of Knights of the Shire for the County of Down* (Dublin, 1784), pp. 17-23.

⁴ See *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Down Election*, 1783.

course of her life, and inspired Horace Walpole to utter some of his truest remarks on the frailty of human nature.¹ During a visit to one of her father's estates, she is supposed to have been robbed in the park and to have come home 'quite naked.'² Many things were said at the time, and Horace even heard it whispered in Mayfair that it was 'a sudden fit of lunacy with which she had been afflicted.'³ But Mr. Walpole was sure that the reports of the affair were exaggerated. 'Is not a country more savage than Hottentots where all private distresses are served up the next morning as entertainment for the public?' he asked a friend. 'When you have waded through the scandal of the day, the next repast is a long dissertation on two contending pantomimes, while a mixture of losses of ships and armies and islands is a glaring mark of the insensible stupidity of the age, which is less occupied by national disgrace and calamity, than by slander that used to be confined to old maids and children. An week's newspapers preserved to the end of the next century will explain why we are fallen so low. They would supply Voltaire with a chapter on *les mœurs du temps*. I think I have justified myself and my contempt for the times I live in, Madam, and why I am not ambitious of having it remembered that I belonged to them.'

Though after this distressing incident she lived a retired life 'in the bosom of her family,' to the education of which she had proceeded to devote all her time, she appears to have lost none of her personal attractions. Visitors to Mount Stewart were delighted with her hospitality and agreeable manners.⁴ 'The more I have known her,' confessed Lord Charlemont (and what better judge of human character was there than this popular aristocrat?), 'the better I have loved her, the surest test of real value.'⁵ His friend Dr. Haliday was equally enthusiastic. On a certain evening, wrote Haliday, 'I had the pleasure of seeing her dance

¹ Walpole to Lady Upper Ossory, Jan. 7, 1782: *Letters of Horace Walpole* (ed. Toynbee), xii. 142.

² Mrs. O'Connell to Miss S. Ponsonby, April 22, 1795: *Hamwood Papers of the Ladies of Llangollen* (ed. Bell), 277.

³ Walpole to Lady Upper Ossory, Jan. 12, 1782: *Letters of Horace Walpole*, xii. 145.

⁴ Lord Camden to Hon. Mrs. Stewart, Dec. 5, 1782: Charl. MSS. De Latocnaye, *Promenade d'un Français dans l'Irlande*, 253 (Dublin, 1797).

⁵ Charlemont to Haliday, May 16, 1796: Charl. MSS.

with much grace and spirit in the midst of her whole brood of eleven most amiable creatures whom she has brought up, or is bringing up, in a manner that does her infinite honour—it was a delightful sight.’¹ She treated her stepson as if he were one of her own children, and he in turn always regarded her as his mother.

By his marriages Robert Stewart thus allied himself with two of the most influential Whig families in England. The long-standing connection of Hertford House with the court both at St. James’s and Carlton House was well known, and the fact that the Seymour influence was directed through the back stairs as well as the more public channels of communication made it of exceptional weight and importance. If they did not possess the same social and political ramifications, the Pratts were more popular in the country, and every whit as powerful in the Council Chamber. Lord Camden,² it is true, had been compelled to surrender the Great Seal in 1770 on account of his openly expressed sympathies with John Wilkes and the American colonists, and as the King’s friends entered upon their blundering and uneasy rule, it had looked as if the ex-minister, who was now nearing seventy, would remain an ex-minister for the rest of his life. However, he re-entered the Cabinet as Lord President under Rockingham and again under Pitt, and though gradually stricken down with gout he managed to retain this office till a particularly severe attack ten years later removed him for ever from the scene of his political labours. In his old age he continued to visit Mount Stewart, and he took the greatest interest in the careers of his grandchildren; Charles was sent to Eton and Robert to Cambridge on his advice. ‘I will teach Charles to respect England and to love Ireland,’ he told his daughter, ‘for I wish both countries united by as strong a tie as your family and mine whose interests can never be divided though you are personally separated by the sea.’³

Though he was no longer a member of Parliament, Robert Stewart did not abandon his political interests. The fact that

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, Feb. 7, 1796: Charl. MSS.

² Charles Pratt (1714-94), first Earl Camden. Chief Justice of Common Pleas, 1761-66. Lord Chancellor, 1766-70. Lord President of the Council, 1782-83, 1784-94.

³ Lord Camden to Hon. Mrs. Stewart, Dec. 5, 1784: Charl. MSS.

another family resident in a different part of the country controlled the borough of Newtownards, which was situated in the midst of his lands and through which he doubtless considered that he should now have been able to re-enter the House of Commons, naturally inclined him to the opinion that some mode of reform in the system of parliamentary representation was desirable. He therefore appeared as one of the leading spirits in the Volunteer Movement. He raised and commanded a regiment in County Down called the 'Ards Independents,' and as Colonel Stewart he was present at the famous National Convention in Dublin, where he was appointed Chairman of the Committee 'for the receiving and digesting plans of reform.'¹ The massed appearance of the Convention in College Green under the auspices of the eccentric Lord Bishop of Derry, who sat in an open landau surrounded by military pomp, somewhat startled the assembled members of Parliament; but the strange cavalcade dissolved peacefully when its Reform Bill had been rejected by the legislature.

Undiscouraged by this sally Robert Stewart continued his visits to the capital during parliamentary winters, and he was seen now and again at Castle levees. Emboldened by someone's remark that he could be as profitably employed in Parliament as out of it, he spoke to his father-in-law on the prospects of a peerage, and Camden promised to forward the matter with the authorities. But Pitt, who at the outset of his ministry found that 'the whole subject of Irish peerages appears to be delicate and requiring much consideration,' could not make the fountain of honours play at will, for there was a long list of prior claimants to be considered. Personally the Prime Minister was not unwilling that Mr. Stewart should be elevated. 'His connection with Lord Camden, joined to what I hear of his situation and character,' he wrote to the Lord-Lieutenant, 'makes it a very desirable object that he should be gratified whenever it can be done with propriety.'² Pitt, who was at this time in the first year of his administration and the twenty-fifth of his life, was naturally anxious to enlist upon his side men of property and

¹ *Charl. Corr.* i. 124.

² W. Pitt to Duke of Rutland, April 21, 1784: *Pitt-Rutland Correspondence*, 13.

influence in both countries. But His Excellency the Duke of Rutland explained that the government was already committed beyond its resources on the question of higher honours, and that Mr. Stewart must wait. To console him he had Mr. Stewart sworn a member of the Irish Privy Council,¹ and his name was put on the waiting list.² Camden continued to press the claim at Downing Street, and in Pitt's words made 'a great point' of it, but in the meantime Mr. Stewart had to be content with the promise that his claim would receive effective attention at a less embarrassing moment.³ When the Lord-Lieutenant died two years later of a surfeit of eating and drinking and less respectable amusements, this promise had not been fulfilled.

Towards the end of the year 1788 George III became seriously ill; and, as he seemed to be going mad, Robert Stewart began to fear that he would never see his name in the honours list, for a Regency and a consequent change of government appeared inevitable. However, his father-in-law was more confident. 'I should think it would notwithstanding take effect,' observed the sage Camden, 'for by the custom of the Castle the successor must always make good the promises of his predecessor, and you will have a sure and powerful friend in my lord H[ertford], so that I am easy enough upon that object.'⁴

The situation caused in Ireland by the King's illness was quite anomalous, and it clearly showed up the weakness of two theoretically independent legislatures functioning under one Crown. The expiration of some essential laws led to the convocation of the Irish Parliament before the Regency question had been properly determined in England. After a heated debate in the Commons both Houses, acting under Grattan's guidance, agreed to petition the Prince of Wales to take upon himself 'the government of this nation during the continuation of His Majesty's present indisposition . . . under the style and title of Prince Regent of Ireland.'⁵ Lord Buckingham, who had succeeded Rutland as viceroy, refused to transmit this address to London, and both Houses of

¹ November 1, 1785: Dublin Castle MSS. (Privy Council Rolls).

² Buckingham to W. Grenville, Mar. 4, May 13, 1789: *Dropmore Papers*, i. 426, 428.

³ Pitt to Rutland, Feb. 1, 1785: *Pitt-Rutland Corr.* 92.

⁴ Earl Camden to R. Stewart, Nov. 23, 1789: Londonderry MSS.

⁵ W. E. H. Lecky, *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 472.

Parliament thereupon passed votes of censure upon him. For a short while it looked as if he would have to pack his trunks, but the sudden and fortunate recovery of the King's health gave the unpopular Lord-Lieutenant an exceptional opportunity of rehabilitating his position, and he made full use of it. The more important of the refractory Crown servants were dismissed, while their subordinates quickly came to heel, and the crisis ended in a shower of fresh honours and appointments upon the faithful. It was not altogether fortunate for Mr. Stewart that this moment should have been chosen by the authorities to satisfy his ambition.¹ Although he was doubtless to a certain extent in sympathy with a viceroy who had to cope with flagrantly unconstitutional conduct on the part of the legislature, Robert Stewart took no part on either side in this shameful affair ; in fact he was described by Buckingham's successor as 'almost the only Irishman who received His Majesty's favour without *rendering service*.'² His advancement to be a peer of the realm was announced with that of a number of others at whose company a less fastidious recipient of this distinction might well have jibbed. He chose for his title the county in which his original family estates were situated, and so he took his seat in the House of Lords as 'Baron of Londonderry' in the peerage of Ireland.³

To the influence of his brother-in-law, the second Lord Camden, who came over to the Viceregal Lodge in 1795, Londonderry owed his promotion in the peerage. Camden, who by his father's death had become an Earl, at first wished the same distinction to be conferred upon his relative simultaneously with that of Viscount ; but after some reflection he concluded that it would be wiser if in his recommendation he adhered to the usual course and proposed to advance his lordship one step in the peerage at a time. 'I feel it due to Lord Londonderry's consequence in the country and to my own connection with him to add his name to be a Viscount,' he wrote when submitting his first honours list to Whitehall. 'And I may say that in the instance of so near a connection as Lord Londonderry I was determined to persevere

¹ Buckingham to W. Grenville, Aug. 12, 1789 : H.O. Ireland, 27.

² Westmoreland to Grenville, Feb. 9, 1792 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 28.

³ Patent of Baron Londonderry dated Aug. 18, 1789 : Dublin Castle MSS. (Lords' Entries, Office of Arms). Gazetted Sept. 9, 1789 : *Annual Register*, 1789, at p. 240.

in the line which had been laid down.' His lordship was therefore created Viscount Castlereagh, the latter title being that of the barony in which lay much of his County Down estates.¹ At the same time the Lord-Lieutenant did not conceal from the Home Secretary the hope that before the end of his administration his brother-in-law would receive the further mark of His Majesty's favour by being created an Earl. 'The nearness of his connection with me at the same time that it would make me consider it as a particular compliment to myself,' Camden tactfully remarked when the time came round a year later, 'would give me the opportunity of stating that reason to those who might be solicitous of that advancement here.'² The authorities were agreeable, and thus the Viscount became an Earl.³

Robert Stewart was Earl of Londonderry now. And, moreover, this last step carried with it courtesy titles for his eleven children. The alteration in the mode of addressing the latter caused their friends some amusement, if not perplexity. Dr. Haliday spent a whole day at Mount Stewart 'practising the new nomenclature, which,' he complained, 'changes in that family almost as often as it does in chemistry.' 'I hope the present one will stand,' he added, 'as I am become tolerably ready with Lady Frances, Lady Elizabeth, Lady Caroline, and a long dwindling line of etc.'⁴ No further change of nomenclature was in fact made, though the fountain of honours had not as yet run dry. On the abolition of the Irish House of Lords in 1800, Londonderry became one of the original twenty-eight representative peers of Ireland chosen to sit with their English fellows at Westminster. There was even some talk in Whitehall of creating him a peer of the United Kingdom 'on account of the eminent services of his son' in promoting the Act of Union, and an official recommendation to this effect was received from Dublin.⁵ However, he was informed that the national interests would be best served by his not pressing for the

¹ Camden to Duke of Portland, June 17, 1795 : H.O. Ireland, 58. Patent of Viscount Castlereagh, dated Oct. 6, 1795 : Dublin Castle MSS. (Lords' Entries, Office of Arms).

² Camden to Portland, June 8, 1796 : H.O. Ireland, 62.

³ Patent of Earl Londonderry, dated Aug. 9, 1796 : Dublin Castle MSS. (Lords' Entries, Office of Arms).

⁴ Haliday to Charlemont, Aug. 13, 1796 : Charl. MSS.

⁵ Cornwallis to Portland, June 17, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 326.

dignity at that moment, though he received an official assurance at the same time that if in the future he or any of his descendants should desire the British peerage the King would be pleased to confer it then.¹ The object of this assurance, as the Home Secretary explained, was to keep Castlereagh in the House of Commons should his father (he was over sixty now) be suddenly removed from the scene of his physical activities.² Consequently the British peerage was not claimed during the lifetime of either Londonderry or Castlereagh, although at the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars the father was advanced a further step in the Irish peerage in recognition of his son's diplomatic achievements at Paris and Vienna.³

4

From 1790 till his death thirty years later my Lord Londonderry seldom left his estates in County Down, which he tended with all the care of an honest resident and improving landlord. Before the 'plantation of Ulster' these estates had formed part of the large territory of Upper Clandeboye belonging to the native O'Neills of Castlereagh. 'Hugh O'Neil hath two castells,' wrote the Lord Chancellor in 1572, 'one called Bealefarst,⁴ an ould castell standing uppon a fourde that leadeth from Arde to Clanneboye . . . the other called Castellrioughe⁵ is fower miles from Bealefarst, and standeth uppon the playne in the middest of the woodes of the Dufferin.'⁶ Towards the end of Elizabeth's reign the O'Neills headed a local rising, but their seemingly impregnable fortresses availed them little, and their chief, Con

¹ Portland to Castlereagh, July 2, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 347.

² Cooke to Castlereagh, July 2, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 350. See below, p. 369.

³ Patent of Marquessate, dated Jan. 22, 1816 : Dublin Castle MSS. (Lords' Entries, Office of Arms).

⁴ Belfast.

⁵ Castlereagh, i.e. 'Grey Castle' (*caislean riabhach*). This castle fell into ruin after the plantation. About 1808 Lord Downshire, on whose land it stood, being anxious to preserve the site, directed his steward to build a wall round it. The steward obeyed his instructions literally by pulling down the remains of the castle and using the stones to build a wall round the foundations. These can still be seen. G. Hill, *Montgomery MSS.*, 23, 83.

⁶ Reid, *Hist. of Presbyterian Church*, i. 485 (from an MS. in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin).

O'Neill, was captured and imprisoned. Con's dramatic escape in a case of cheese from Carrickfergus Castle was procured by a certain Scot, Sir Hugh Montgomery, Laird of Braidstane—besides which Sir Hugh obtained Con's pardon from James I and at the same time one-third of his lands in the 'plantation.'¹ These forfeited lands comprised the modern baronies of Castlereagh and Ards, and therein were situated the manors of Comber and Newtownards. The two latter estates adjoined at the borough of Newtownards, and extended about half-way along each shore of Lough Strangford. They remained in the possession of the Montgomery family for a little over fifty years. Sir Hugh's grandson, the first Earl of Mount Alexander, ran himself heavily into debt whilst fighting on the royalist side during the Civil Wars: to mark the Restoration he dissipated the remainder of his fortune, and these exertions causing a 'swimming and obfuscation in his brain,' he died a comparatively young man, bequeathing to his son and heir the invidious task of selling the estates to pay his debts.² The purchaser was another Scottish settler named Sir Robert Colville,³ and his descendant in turn sold them to Alexander Stewart towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the conveyance of the Newtownards estate being attended by the strange political consequences which have been described above.⁴

The demesne of Mount Stewart, which at the time of its acquisition by Alexander Stewart was already richly planted with trees, lay on the eastern shore of Lough Strangford about four miles from the borough of Newtownards. It awoke the interest of Arthur Young. During his tour through Ireland in the year 1776, Mr. Young was particularly impressed by the fine prospect it commanded of 'an amazing variety of islands, creeks, and bays which appear among cultivated hills in the most picturesque manner.'⁵ As he rode from Newtownards to Portaferry he also

¹ G. Hill, *op. cit.* 26, 40.

² *Id.* 241, 267-8. The Newtownards estate was sold in 1675 for £10,640 and the Comber (or Mount Alexander) estate in 1679 for £9,780. The deeds of purchase are in the Londonderry Estate Office.

³ On the Colvilles and the relations of this remarkable family with the Stewarts, see an interesting article by J. M. Dickson in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, v. 139, 202 (May-Sept. 1899).

⁴ See above, pp. 11-13.

⁵ A. Young, *Tour in Ireland*, i. 143 (ed. Hutton).

noticed 'a row of neat stone and slate cabbins (*sic*) in the neighbourhood of some new plantations, where Mr. Stewart intends building.'¹ The 'cabbins,' though small, were by no means uncomfortable, and Robert Stewart took his large family to live in them whilst the mansion house was under construction.²

The house, indeed, was to be a grand affair. The hall, for instance, is said to have been specially designed by the brothers Robert and James Adam; it certainly constitutes an exquisite example of their style of interior decoration.³ By 1790 the west wing had been completed, but further progress was very slow and for a time ceased altogether. Operations were continually postponed for lack of funds, money originally earmarked for this purpose being devoted to fighting the Hillsboroughs in successive county elections. In fact Londonderry did not live to see the completion of the house as he had planned it, although by 1817 it only wanted the chapel and some additional bedrooms.⁴ The plain but imposing design in which the whole structure was carried out lent peculiar force to the Ionic columns with which it was finished, and showed that the Georgians even in Ireland still paid some attention to classic form and lines.

Bricks and mortar could also make some pleasing additions to the demesne. Elegant and suitably draped statuary were distributed at decent intervals throughout the grounds, and as no country residence was considered complete without a miniature Greek temple, one of these delightful buildings was erected in the Corinthian order. The Temple of the Winds (so it was called to commemorate a dramatic incident in Castlereagh's boyhood) soon became a landmark, for it could be seen from far out in the Lough peeping over the beech trees, and it served another practical purpose. By day members of the family and their guests would repair to it for rest and contemplation (the brothers Adam had made the interior most presentable), and by night for dessert and post-prandial conversation. 'I could have stayed,' confessed Dr. Haliday when he was once called away from one

¹ Young, i. 136.

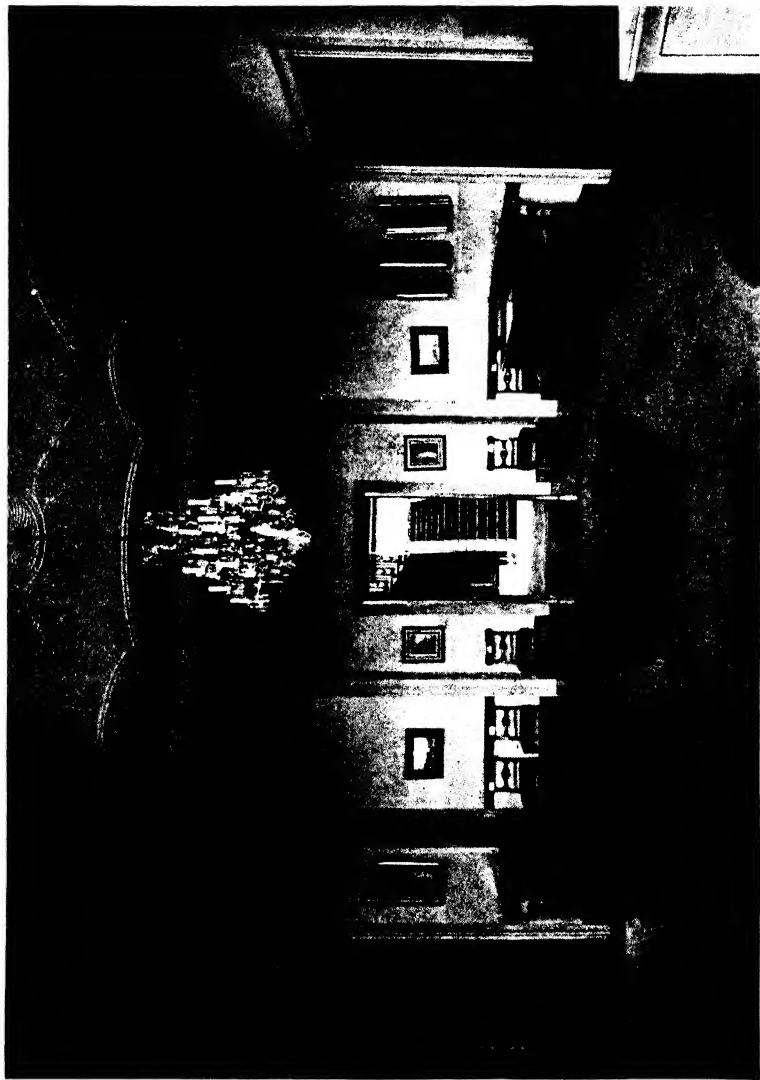
² Lord Camden writing to the Duke of Grafton, during one of his visits observed: 'My apartment is a snug cabin upon the shore of a vast arm of the sea, and commanding a very fine and extensive prospect': Marchioness of Londonderry, *Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh*, 4.

³ This room is now the breakfast-room.

⁴ A. Atkinson, *Ireland exhibited to England*, i. 222-9.



MOUNT STEWART, COUNTY DOWN



MOUNT STEWART. THE OLD ENTRANCE HALL

of these latter gatherings to visit a patient (he dearly loved a symposium). 'An honest wine-glass is the well at the bottom of which squats truth.'¹

Owing to the quantity of strong clay in the soil, which when mixed with sand is capable of producing the finest crops, the greater part of the estates were under cultivation. A visitor in the year 1817 stated that, from what he could learn, 'no man was ever more beloved by his tenantry and neighbours' than the resident landlord who had spent a princely fortune on the place.² Nevertheless, the political and sectarian disturbances which took place throughout Ulster before the Rebellion of '98 produced a very different picture. When the United Irish 'system' was in full swing during the dark autumn of 1796, these tenants (most of whom being Presbyterians were sympathetic with the objects of the new movement) found it impossible as a whole to resist the pressure which its leaders so energetically directed. 'The terror, which has been inspired by threats of assassination if they would not join with them,' reported the Lord-Lieutenant, 'was carried to such a length that scarcely one of Lord Londonderry's tenants would dare to speak to him if they met him on the road or would even show him the slightest mark of respect.'³ A conspiracy was formed amongst the labourers to murder the estate agent, but fortunately for the latter the assassin's pistol missed fire and the villain escaped in the darkness of the night.⁴ His lordship was in consequence compelled to ask the governor of the county for a body of troops to protect his property. 'Indeed in the state the country is in,' he wrote, 'my house and family are not safe without an armed force, especially if I have to act as a magistrate and become an object of resentment.'⁵ When

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, July 1795 : Charl. MSS. The Temple of the Winds was erected on the site of a remarkable ancient Druidical cemetery. For authoritative description of tumulus, cairn and funeral urns, see S. M. Stephenson, *An Historical Essay on the Parish and Congregation of Greyabbey*, pp. 6-9 (Belfast, 1828); and also *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* (1861), ix. 111-113.

² A. Atkinson, *Ireland exhibited to England*, i. 229.

³ Camden to Portland, Dec. 13, 1796 : H.O. Ireland, 62.

⁴ See below, pp. 163-164.

⁵ Londonderry to Downshire, Oct. 30, 1796 : Dublin Castle MSS. Gunpowder to the value of £36 14s. 1d. was sent by Londonderry's order from Dublin to Newtownards : Estate Office MSS. (Accounts Journal, 1791-1803).

the yeomanry had arrived and half a company was lodged at Mount Stewart, the landlord set about the difficult task of winning over his tenantry to their former allegiance. 'The Whiteboy Act has not *yet* been put in force at Mount Stewart,' facetiously announced the official rebel organ, the *Northern Star*, 'but forty new bibles have been ordered to swear all the tenantry of Lord Londonderry—but not to be United Irishmen.'¹ The tactful and pacific manner in which this object was achieved, and the major part which his son Castlereagh played in weaning some one thousand seven hundred men on the estate from their treason, will be described later.²

Unfortunately the general state of the country showed no immediate signs of improving. Most of the trouble originated in Belfast, the rebel headquarters in the north, which his lordship regarded rightly as 'a cursed den of traitors.'³ Repeated attacks were made on his yeomanry corps in the neighbourhood of Newtownards, and one of them was actually murdered. The remedy was clear. 'I am seriously of opinion that nothing but the most vigorous and instantaneous measures can resist this rebellious spirit,' he declared early in the next year. 'A large body of troops must be marched into this part of the country and the inhabitants disarmed and made sensible of the efficacy of Martial Law, for the Civil Power is now set at defiance here.'⁴ This advice was substantially followed, and in March 1797 the whole country was proclaimed under the Insurrection Act,⁵ which relieved the smouldering rebellion in the north of any serious consequences. When Henry Joy McCracken and 'General' Munro made a move to join their southern friends in '98 they were unable to rally enough supporters to establish the desired communication, though they put forward an extremely vigorous resistance when challenged. For a short time a rebel contingent was in complete possession of the Ards, and six of Londonderry's children just managed to escape from Mount Stewart as the invading force was entering the demesne. It was expected that the house at least would be burnt, as many other mansions in

¹ *Northern Star*, Sept. 26, 1796. ² See below, pp. 161-170.

³ Londonderry to Camden, Dec. 31, 1796 : Dublin Castle MSS.

⁴ Londonderry to Camden, Feb. 28, 1797 : Dublin Castle MSS.

⁵ *Northern Star*, March 6, 1797.

the neighbourhood had been treated in this manner, but when the owner marched back into the Ards at the head of his yeomanry the estate was found to have suffered little beyond the theft of some cattle.¹ The handful of labourers who participated in this invasion were subsequently captured and brought before a court-martial at Newtownards, where chiefly by reason of their master's influence they received the lenient sentence of flogging.² One of them, who attempted to assassinate a fellow-tenant not of his way of thinking, and swore at the same time that he 'intended to live in Lord Londonderry's house the next week,' did, it is true, receive a capital sentence, but this punishment does not appear to have been carried out.³ At the battle of Ballynahinch, which restored order in the north, two of the Mount Stewart house servants were also found in the rebel ranks.⁴ But such men as these were not his lordship's only enemies, for, although he had been bred a Presbyterian, it was proved that three of his former friends, who were dissenting ministers, had planned a division of his estates among themselves in the event of the rebellion proving successful.⁵ One of these 'black-mouthed' individuals, who had previously exposed his lordship to ridicule in a satire appearing in the *Northern Star* under the assumed name of 'Billy Bluff,' was caught in the act of robbing a post-boy of an official military despatch, and was condemned to death by a court-martial.⁶ The erring minister's friends thought it strange that my Lord Londonderry should not have obtained a reprieve for the rebel who had first brutally lampooned him (he is Lord Mountmumble in the satire) and then planned to appropriate his estates. In any case his lordship had no power to interfere with the sentence of a properly

¹ Bishop Percy to his wife, June 11, July 9, 1798 : Percy MSS. (Add. B.M. 32,335). Castlereagh to Pelham, June 16, 1798 : Pelham MSS. (Add. B.M. 33,104).

² See Minutes of trial of Adam Millar, etc., at Newtownards, July 2, 1798 : Dublin Castle MSS.

³ See Minutes of trial of Hugh Boyd at Newtownards, July 20, 1798 : Dublin Castle MSS.

⁴ Castlereagh to Elliot, June 15, 1798 : Pelham MSS.

⁵ Bishop Percy to his wife, July 23, 1798 : Percy MSS. (Add. B.M. 32,335).

⁶ Rev. James Porter (1753-98), Presbyterian Minister in Greyabbey. See Minutes of his trial at Newtownards, June 28 and 29, 1798 : Dublin Castle MSS. *Billy Bluff and Squire Firebrand* (Belfast, 1796). W. T. Latimer, *Ulster Biographies*, 62-74.

constituted military court in which he had not been sitting. He was present, however, at the execution, and possibly remembering his former friendship with the doomed man, he managed to prevent the usual custom of mutilating the body, which, as soon as it was cut down, he caused to be returned to the family for burial.¹

In spite of various partisan assertions to the contrary, there is no doubt that Londonderry conscientiously followed his father's example in seeking to improve local conditions of living, and that he had the welfare of his tenantry at heart. A French traveller who visited Mount Stewart in the stormy autumn of '96 and expected to see the labourers chained to the plough, confessed that the peasantry in this district seemed "*aisés et se tiennent assez proprement*".² He did much to establish the principle of fixity of tenure by recognising and promoting the local right whereby outgoing tenants received compensation from the landlord for improvements they had effected during the terms of their tenancies.³ During the food scarcity in the years 1800 and 1801 he opened free soup kitchens in Newtownards and imported large quantities of provisions into the district, which he retailed at a nominal price for the benefit of the whole neighbourhood.⁴ The charge has been brought against him that he refused to accept bank notes in payment of rent, and by thus insisting on specie enabled his land agent to carry on a usurious banking business with the tenants who came to him to exchange their notes. The truth is that for a short period during and immediately after the Rebellion all the leading landowners in the north were compelled to refuse bank notes at their estate offices on account of the large number of forgeries in circulation and the fact that

¹ Latimer, *op. cit.* 71.

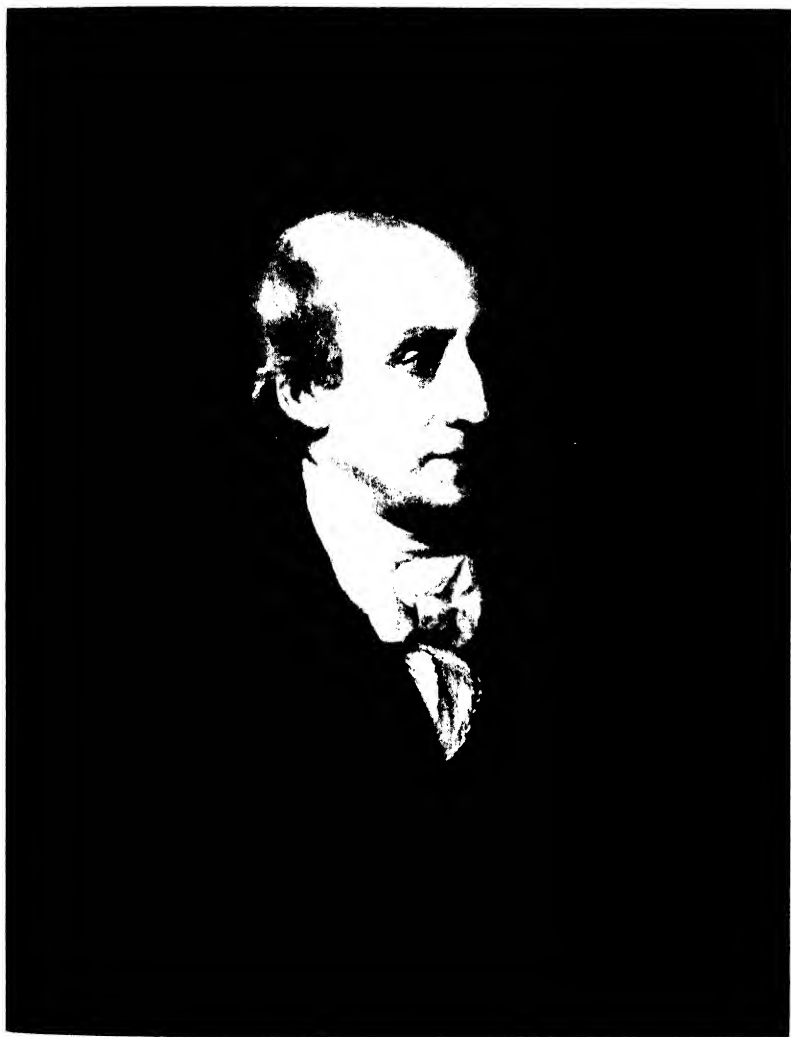
² De Latocnaye, *Promenade d'un Français dans l'Irlande*, 254.

³ The Ulster Tenant Right: *Cast. Corr.* i. 71.

⁴ *Cast. Corr.* i. 70. *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 5, 1800. The following lines from a poem on the Down Hunt, which appeared in 1802, are supposed to refer to him :

' Here still some are wont to meet,
Sober, rational, discreet,
Friends to poor, to tenants dear,
Kind, obliging and sincere.'

Rev. Samuel Burdy, *Ardglass and other Poems*, 88.



ROBERT STEWART, FIRST MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY

1739-1821

*From a portrait in the collection of The Most Honourable
The Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.*

the Bank of Ireland took no steps to check this abuse.¹ Though expressly forbidden to do so, it is probable that the agent did for a time make a handsome profit out of these transactions, until Castlereagh, as Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant, himself suppressed the business.² Far from being the greedy landlord which he has been painted by his enemies, Londonderry is known to have reduced his rents in bad times, and on occasion to have remitted them altogether.³

He had, of course, many invidious duties to perform, both as an officer and a magistrate, but he did not flinch from them. On one occasion a desperate character was sentenced to be flogged in the market place of Newtownards, and the Sheriff fearing an attempt at rescue requested Colonel Stewart to attend with his company of Volunteers. As it turned out the delinquent almost got away on the scaffold. Whilst he was being secured and Colonel Stewart 'was ordering matters proper to punish him,' an amusing scuffle took place; and the executioner, who was brandishing his whip and crying 'Room! Room!' did not succeed in dealing effectively with the object of his attentions until he had first struck the Colonel several severe blows by mistake.⁴ After the Rebellion his lordship presided with conspicuous fairness at several of the courts-martial which sat at Newtownards, and the reports on the state of the north which he regularly submitted to Dublin when Castlereagh was Chief Secretary were of the utmost value to the authorities. His administrative talents finally received public recognition when, on Downshire's sudden death in 1801, he succeeded to the governorship of the county.⁵

Though never in any sense did he play a prominent part in public life, Castlereagh's father rose by sheer merit to a place of political and social distinction in the north of Ireland, which commanded general respect and admiration. Nor must it be forgotten that he obtained at the same time a reputation for honesty which many of his contemporaries lacked, but which has been borne out by such a disinterested and astute critic as my

¹ Downshire to Castlereagh, June 8, 1799 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 331.

² F. J. Bigger, *Four Shots from Down*, 57-58 ; local tradition.

³ *Cast. Corr.* i. 71. Londonderry MSS. *Observer*, Aug. 18, 1822.

⁴ McTier to Drennan, May 1787 : Drennan Letters, 234 (unpublished).

⁵ See below, p. 406.

Lord Charlemont. Allusion has already been made to his generosity. Both charities and individuals were the recipients of his bounty, and in his eightieth year he was regularly seen driving up to Belfast to attend meetings at the Poor House.¹ By his native shrewdness he secured the foundation of his family's position in the country, and so was enabled to launch his eldest son well out upon the rough sea of contemporary politics and parties. Indeed, he left nothing undone in fairness to advance the fortunes of all his children, of whom nine out of thirteen successfully passed the stage of adolescence.² He even sold a valuable collection of pictures to help towards paying Castlereagh's election expenses in 1790.³ He did not regret this and other similar sacrifices, for he felt that he would in the course of time be amply repaid for them. Nor was he mistaken. A quarter of a century later he declared to Lady Castlereagh, on the occasion of her husband's triumphant return from the Continent laden with honours from a dozen European courts : ' I can well imagine how much you share and partake in my paternal delirium, which sometimes so works on my imagination, I can scarcely refrain from saying, " Is all this really true ? " ' ⁴

Such was Robert Stewart, first Marquess of Londonderry—father, landlord, patriot.

¹ Charles Vane, Marquess of Londonderry, *Memoirs of Viscount Castlereagh* : Londonderry MSS.

² See Appendix I, below.

³ See below, pp. 67-68.

⁴ Londonderry to Lady Castlereagh, June 14, 1814 : Londonderry MSS. Londonderry, *Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh*, 3.

CHAPTER II

EARLY YEARS : EDUCATION AND A COUNTY ELECTION

I

CASTLEREAGH was born at his grandfather's house, No. 28 Henry Street, Dublin, on the 18th of June, 1769.¹ He was born, therefore, in the high noon of the eighteenth century. Dr. Johnson still entertained a select company of friends at the Mitre Tavern (his Dictionary had now become well known), and was at that moment enjoying the sea-bathing at Brighthelmstone with Mrs. Thrale. Price was preaching deism, and Voltaire as volubly protesting against idolatry. Josiah Wedgwood was busy in his newly opened potteries in Etruria, and Arkwright was experimenting with a spinning roller worked by water power. Robertson had just published his *History of the Emperor Charles V.* The Prime Minister continued to be seen at the opera with his mistress, and 'Junius' thundered at the Duke's incompetence. John Wilkes

¹ MS. Register of Baptisms in the Protestant Dissenting Congregation, Strand Street, Dublin. Dublin Castle MSS. (Lords' Entries, Office of Arms). MS. Admission Register, St. John's College, Cambridge. *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 23, 1822. *Dublin Gazette*, June 17-20, 1769, and other contemporary newspapers.

Most previous writers, following the obituary notice in the *Annual Register*, 1822, at p. 618 (Appendix), have stated incorrectly that Castlereagh was born at Mount Stewart. The house in Henry Street may be identified from Rocque's 'Map of Dublin in 1756' as that which stands on the south side, fourth from the Sackville Street end. It was probably the largest house in the street (being really two houses made into one), and appears as the only one whose garden extended as far back as Prince's Street. It may not actually have received a number till some years later, since few Dublin houses are found numbered before 1775. (The first reference to the house by its number that I can discover occurs in the printed *List of the Proprietors of Private Sedan Chairs in 1787*). The family sold it in 1791; and it was ultimately acquired by H.M. Government in 1815 and demolished along with adjacent houses to make room for the new General Post Office: Walsh, *History of Dublin*, ii. 1009. The present entrance to the latter building from Henry Street would therefore exactly coincide with the front entrance to the old house at No. 28.

staged some characteristic fireworks in Middlesex and went to gaol cheered by the mob. The American colonies, led by the Virginian assembly and the Boston tea-merchants, were drifting towards independence. Fox had just entered Parliament, and Pitt, not yet in his 'teens, worked hard at his Latin verses, while his father limped painfully down to the House of Lords. The Russians were annexing slices of Turkish territory, and casting greedy eyes on Poland. General Paoli had just been driven out of Corsica, and Madame Buonaparte of the same island was already big with child. In Dublin the round went on much as usual behind the porticoes and fanlights of Rutland Square and Stephen's Green—talking, drinking, loving, wrangling, travelling and dying. Dublin virginity paled at the assaults of His Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant. But the latest arrival in Henry Street knew and cared for none of these things. Nor was he aware that in a large house at the other end of the town Lady Mornington's baby, Arthur, was now over six weeks old and showing signs of lusty boyhood. June 18. A great day, surely, for on its anniversary forty-six years later the fate of Europe was decided by three men who were each born in 1769. Two of them were Irishmen, and one a Frenchman. Their names were the Emperor Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington, and Viscount Castlereagh.

Lady Sarah was glad when they told her it was a boy, for her first-born son had died that very month. She recovered quickly from her confinement, and within three weeks was able to make a short but necessary excursion to the chapel of the 'Protestant Dissenting Congregation' in Strand Street, where the infant was baptised in the faith of his ancestors. Like most second sons he received his father's name, and so when the party returned to Henry Street there were two Robert Stewarts.¹ The child was making his first efforts to walk when the household, which for some time had been expecting a further addition to its number, was suddenly plunged in grief by the death of its beautiful and talented young mistress.² A move was immediately made to the

¹ The baptismal ceremony, which took place on July 5, 1769, was performed by the Rev. John Moody, D.D. : MS. Register of Baptisms in the Protestant Dissenting Congregation, Strand Street, Dublin (now in the Unitarian Church, 112 Stephen's Green) : *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 23, 1822. He appears to have assumed the additional name of Henry at a later date, as this is not mentioned in the register.

² Lady Sarah Stewart died July 17, 1770. See above, p. 17.

north so that her remains might be interred in the Stewart family vault, but Robert could scarcely remember this pathetic migration. But he was familiar with her likeness, for she left him a miniature of herself and a plait of her hair, which were later incorporated in a brooch and appropriately inscribed 'Irreparable.' Robert faithfully wore this brooch to the day of his death.¹

Robert's childhood days were spent with his grandparents in Newtownards, where the kindly and agreeable Mrs. Stewart (*née* Cowan) took him in charge until his father married again. In the meantime the elected member for the county became better acquainted with his constituents and their opinions. Following the example of other Presbyterian families of consequence in Ulster, he considered it wiser to have the boy educated according to the principles of the Established Church (Dissenters were still excluded from civil and military office). At the same time he did not feel justified in exposing him to the manifold temptations of Eton life, and so it was decided to keep him in Ireland for the present. At the age of eight, therefore, he was sent as a boarder to the Royal School at Armagh, one of the grammar schools founded in Ulster during the reign of Charles I. This institution, which was the most reputable of its kind in the north of Ireland, was conducted under the patronage of the Primate, whose zeal for building and education was rapidly converting Armagh from a collection of mud cabins into a handsome and populous town.² Arthur Young, who chanced to pass through it not long before Robert's arrival, was much impressed by the new school buildings, which included a large hall, a commodious dining-room, a walled-in playground, and 'spacious airy dormitories with every other necessary.'³ There was accommodation for a hundred pupils, and the terms for boarders were forty guineas a year. The headmaster was a fine scholar and administrator, the Rev. Arthur Grueber, D.D., who in twenty years of unbroken rule had succeeded in raising this academy to a standard of scholastic excel-

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 23, 1822.

² Richard Robinson (1709-94), 1st Baron Rokeby. Archbishop of Armagh, 1765-94.

³ A. Young, *Tour in Ireland*, i. 118 (ed. Hutton). These buildings were erected by the Primate and the Headmaster in 1774 and are still in use.

lence which it still retains.¹ On the whole, however, the school-boy's lot in eighteenth-century Ireland was by no means pleasant—magisterial floggings were brutal and frequent, 'fagging' was relentless, bullying was general, and when the boys were not at open war with their masters, they as often as not were fighting pistol duels with each other. In spite of its pious and erudite head, we know that Armagh Royal School was exempt from none of these failings, though Robert Stewart has not recorded any experience of them.²

Young Master Stewart was escorted to Armagh by a private tutor, who, we are told, remained at hand and 'aided him in his academic studies.'³ The determined manner in which he settled down to these studies in new surroundings may be gathered from the following letter written early in the term to his uncle Alexander.⁴ It is the earliest example of his correspondence extant, and is penned in a firm round-hand.

ARMAGH, Oct. 6, 1777.

DEAR UNCLE,

Thank you for your kind letter. At present I am highest in my class—no boy shall get above me. I am resolved to study very close when at my Book, and to play very briskly when disengaged. Sure my sister Fanny is not marked by the Small Pox—I wish she understood how much I love her and all my friends. Indeed I long to see Papa and Mamma soon, and my Newtown friends at Vacation. How is Johnny? My love to cousin Price.⁵—I am still a true American.

ROBERT STEWART.

Alexander Stewart Junior,
Newtownards.

¹ J. B. Leslie, *Armagh Parishes and Clergy*, 80. James Stuart, *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*, 541-5 (Newry, 1819). Stuart was contemporary with Castlereagh at this school, and in the obituary notice which he contributed to the *Belfast News-Letter* (Aug. 20-27, 1822) as its editor, he gives some interesting details of his life there.

² Cp. W. S. Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, chs. i-ii, *passim*; J. Hamilton, *Sixty Years' Experience of an Irish Landlord*, ch. i.

³ *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1822. The tutor was a 'Mr. Bingham'—probably a connection of John Bingham, created 1st Baron Clanmorris in 1800.

⁴ Robert Stewart to Alexander Stewart, Oct. 6, 1777: Londonderry MSS.

⁵ Nicholas Price of Saintfield, later High Sheriff of County Down. His stepmother (Frances Seymour-Conway) was Robert Stewart's great-aunt. He married Lady Sarah Pratt, daughter of the 1st Lord Camden.

In spite of its royal foundation, the School evidently took the Whig side in politics, and local feeling ran high in favour of the lately revolted colonies beyond the Atlantic—indeed, the north of Ireland had supported the Declaration of Independence almost to a man, and many Ulster emigrants were at that moment serving under Washington's colours. The 'Johnny' for whom he enquires was John Cleland, a young divinity student lately returned from the University of Glasgow with a master's degree, whose acquaintance he had made in Newtownards. Now it so happened that after a short time in Armagh Robert's worthy tutor fell into bad health and resigned his situation. Cleland, who appears to have been already known to the family as a young man gifted with a lively intelligence and sense of responsibility, thereupon contrived to get himself appointed in his place; and if 'Johnny' was a little over-ambitious, it was satisfactory to know that he 'remained with his pupil during his residence in Armagh, and zealously fulfilled the duties of his station.'¹ He was to play an important and useful part in Robert's early life. The manner of influence which he exercised upon his pupil at this period may be judged from a contemporary school-fellow's description of Robert as 'a gentle, docile, spirited, benevolent, and affectionate boy.'²

The holidays were spent in Newtownards, but varied with excursions to Dublin, for his father was back in Henry Street writing speeches on the wretched state of the nation's finances and defences, which he delivered vigorously from the Opposition side of the House. Great Britain was now at war with France and Spain, and Ireland was speedily enrolling and arming the Volunteers to protect herself against hostile invasion. Robert commenced to understand why people were shouting for free trade and self-government, and for the first time he saw the men whose names were in every mouth—Flood, Charlemont, and Grattan. In 1781 his grandfather, Alexander Stewart, died, and his father and the rest of the family came to live at Mount Stewart, where the building of the mansion house was being hurried on. About the

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1822. On John Cleland (1755-1834) see J. B. Leslie, *Armagh Parishes and Clergy*, 35; F. J. Bigger, *Four Shots from Down*, 51-59; W. Steele Dickson, *Narrative*, *passim*, etc.

² James Stuart: *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1822.

same time Robert was removed from Armagh so that he might be nearer his new home, and was now put to a small private school in the neighbouring village of Portaferry. This latter establishment was kept by the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Reverend William Sturrock, a man of whom it has been said that his 'sweetness of temper, gentleness of manners, and correctness of morals, were as well calculated to conciliate the heart to virtue, as his judgment, taste, and literary attainments were to enrich the understanding with the principles of knowledge.'¹ Under such a meritorious teacher it is hardly surprising the pupil's progress in learning should have been a source of gratification to his parents. Here, too, he found scope for the more practical exercise of his talents, since we learn that 'he was accustomed to retire, during the hours allotted to play, to a wind-mill, where he sometimes formed plans of fortifications, and sometimes trained the boys to military evolutions.'²

Appropriately enough it was in a 'military evolution' that Robert first attracted public attention. His father, as has already been noticed, commanded a local regiment of Volunteers, and on the occasion of a splendid review held at Belfast in 1782 a sham fight was staged in which both of them played a prominent part. This proceeding, which was witnessed by a vast crowd of civilians, took the form of an attack upon the town. The Ards Independents led by Colonel Stewart constituted the van of the invading army. The enemy advance guard having shown little resistance was put to flight, leaving a small party behind on some rising ground with one piece of cannon to cover the retreat. To dislodge this party and take possession of the cannon, young Robert was despatched at the head of a contingent of light infantry. His band, which consisted of boys a few years older than himself, conducted their action with a strong resemblance to reality, and had no difficulty in reaching their objective. 'When the defendants gave way and abandoned their gun,' observed an onlooker, 'young Stewart rushed forward in the ardour of his soul, grasped it with his arms, then mounted its carriage, and with tears of triumph huzzaed to the main body, and called them to come

¹ W. Steele Dickson, *Narrative*, 18. On Sturrock see J. B. Leslie, *Armagh Parishes and Clergy*, 55.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 20, 1822.

on ! ' ¹ Small wonder was it that such patriotic exertions should have made a lasting impression upon the minds of many present at the spectacle and have excited the general admiration of the county.

Robert's attractive *naïveté* was amply confirmed during his father's election contest in the following year. The boy (he was fourteen now) worked most assiduously for the 'independent' cause, fascinating everyone whom he met with his mild manners and intelligent conversation. One morning the Rev. William Steele Dickson brought up forty freeholders to Downpatrick, and after parading them on horseback through the streets, drew them up outside the candidate's lodgings. When this gathering had been perceived by those within, it was greeted with expressions of joy, since Colonel Stewart had not that day been able to make up his first tally in the Sheriff's Court. Robert immediately rushed out into the street and, throwing his arms round the neck of the leader's horse, enquired : ' Oh, Mr. Dickson, are *all* these for my father ? ' On receiving an affirmative answer, he darted back into the house, and returning a moment later with the candidate, exclaimed to the delight of the crowd which had already assembled : ' See ! See ! Father ! See what Mr. Dickson has brought ! I would rather be at the head of such a yeomanry than be the first lord ever a king created ! ' ² By a strange irony of fate this minister, whose admiration of Robert's patriotism was then most fulsome, lived to describe his young friend as ' the unblushing betrayer of his country to a foreign sanhedrin. ' ³

A frequent visitor to the north of Ireland in the Volunteering days was the ex-Lord Chancellor Camden, and taking a great fancy to Robert, whom he met in one of these excursions, he strongly advised his son-in-law to send him to Cambridge. This course was at length decided upon, and the usual preparations were made for his reception in the College of St. John the Evangelist. In the meantime he was developing ' a strong taste for natural philosophy and the liberal arts ' under the worthy guidance of Mr. Sturrock. His knowledge of physics was remarkable, for

¹ Dickson, 14.

² *Id.* 17.

³ *Id.* 229. The Rev. W. Steele Dickson, Presbyterian Minister at Portaferry, later became one of the most prominent United Irish leaders in the north, and was imprisoned by order of Castlereagh during the Rebellion.

at Mount Stewart he had 'a pneumatic and hydrostatic apparatus of very great value,' and we are told that 'he felt peculiar delight in the experiments which they afforded him an opportunity of trying.'¹ But he was by no means a bookworm. He spent many hours sailing and fishing in the lough. He mixed freely with the lads on the estate, and he became well known to all the fishermen and their families in the neighbourhood. The personal courage which he was frequently called upon to display in later years undoubtedly had its foundation in this hardy adventurous life. He was the victim of at least one boating accident, in which he saved the life of a friend and nearly lost his own.

One summer morning not long after his eighteenth birthday he set out for a sail with his schoolmaster's son, Henry Sturrock, a boy of twelve. When they had cruised in the lough for some hours they were suddenly overtaken by a violent thunderstorm. Rain and hail came down in torrents, and Robert, who had been steering, gave the tiller to his companion, telling him to keep the boat as she lay, with sails flapping, and retired for a few minutes' shelter to the foredeck, as he was more scantily clad than the other. Unfortunately Sturrock kept his hand too far down, with the result that the boat swung round, the sails fell aback, and she went to the bottom in several fathoms of water. At this critical moment they were about three miles from the shore, and while Robert was but an indifferent swimmer, the younger boy could not swim a stroke. As the stern went down first, they both came up together; and Robert (his study of physics here stood him in good stead) immediately reminded his friend, who was clutching wildly at his cotton jacket, of what they had been reading a few days before—namely, 'that the human body was lighter bulk for bulk than water, and therefore when water was unagitated, it would float in safety, provided the face was a little elevated above the level of the body.'² With commendable fortitude they both submitted to this experiment, and aided by the tiller and a piece of board, the sole remains of their vessel on the surface, Robert succeeded in keeping himself and the other above water for over an hour.

¹ James Stuart: *Belfast News-Letter*, ed., Aug. 23, 1822.

² Dickson, 355. This description of the accident is based on the account which was subsequently communicated by the two boys to the Rev. W. Steele Dickson.

Their absence on shore was first noticed by Lord Camden, who was on one of his visits to his son-in-law, but as it was supposed that the two boys had gone fishing under adequate supervision, no uneasiness was felt. After a while Cleland ('Johnny' had now exchanged the duties of tutor for those of Stewart land agent) suggested to the Reverend Sturrock, who was also staying at Mount Stewart, a walk through the grounds to the newly-finished Grecian Temple above the lough. On reaching this spot one of them looked out and saw in the distance what he thought to be figures struggling in the water. Cleland immediately ran down to the beach and put off with two men in a yawl in the direction of the accident. The rescue party happily succeeded in reaching the scene of the wreck and picking up the two boys as they were in the act of sinking. Young Sturrock was completely unconscious, and Robert was found to have lost the power of his limbs and almost his sight from the coldness of the water. Both soon revived with domestic attention. When Sturrock was learning to swim some time later, it was discovered that he was incapable of supporting himself on the surface for a moment. The local newspaper described Robert's conduct in glowing language. 'We congratulate his friends on his escape,' concluded the editor prophetically, 'and the community of which he promises one day to be a valuable member.'¹ His father had a picture of the lough and the temple (henceforth called the Temple of the Winds) specially painted and inscribed to commemorate the occasion. 'Let not these particulars of a deliverance almost miraculous,' it was written, 'pass without just emotions of gratitude to the Almighty Preserver, and let it teach a due reliance on His Providence in the greatest of dangers.'²

2

The time had now come for Robert to go up to Cambridge, so one day early in October 1786 he and his father stepped on board the packet boat at Dunleary. In those days there were actually six sailing services on which the much-dreaded journey across the

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 11, 1786.

² From the inscription on the picture now at Mount Stewart: *Cast. Corr.* i. 5. See also Dickson, 353-7, and Alison, i. 8.

Irish Sea could be attempted, but the line to Holyhead which they chose was the safest and most comfortable. With favouring winds the voyage could be successfully accomplished in ten hours, though at other times passengers had to spend several days and nights on board. But this route possessed one great advantage. Schoolboys and undergraduates had frequently disappeared on the others, but 'the possibility of a Holyhead packet being lost had no place in the catalogue of adverse contingencies—not even when calculated by mothers.'¹

On disembarking in Wales they took their seats on the stage coach and posted quickly south. Robert's hopes rose as they bowled along the unfamiliar roads. Bangor, Conway, Llanrust, Kerniog, Mawr, Corwan, each passed in quick succession till they were set down in the vale of Llangollen, for Mr. Stewart wished to pay his respects to the 'Ladies' and present his son. If they were not yet the two 'most celebrated virgins in Europe' that they became, Miss Ponsonby and Miss Butler had spent almost ten years in that 'sweetly enjoyed retirement' which they had dared so much to secure, and every traveller on the road from Holyhead to Shrewsbury already felt the desire to look in at Plas Newydd and inspect their curious *ménage*.² The ladies formed an immediate liking for the young man, whom they pronounced 'charming and beautiful'—'a handsome graceful Conway.'³ Respect was mutual, and henceforward until the year before his death Robert, whenever he passed to or from Ireland, never failed to call upon them and discuss the news of the day.⁴

His father now declared that, as it wanted some days before the commencement of the university term, they would pay a visit to the head of the family, whom Robert was supposed to resemble. They therefore changed coaches at Birmingham, where

¹ T. De Quincey, *Works*, i. 213.

² Miss Sarah Ponsonby was a daughter of Chambre Brabazon Ponsonby, and a cousin of Lord Bessborough. Miss Butler became Lady Eleanor Butler on the establishment of her brother's claim to the Earldom of Ormonde in 1791: see *Dict. Nat. Biog.* viii. 48, and *The Hamwood Papers of the Ladies of Llangollen and Caroline Hamilton* (ed. Bell), *passim*.

³ *Hamwood Papers*, 105.

⁴ Cp. *Hamwood Papers*, 328, for account of their last breakfast together (August 1821).

they left the London road and turned west. On they went through Northampton, Bedford and Suffolk, till at length they passed Ipswich and saw the woods of Sudbourne Hall. Here they met with a cordial reception from Lord Hertford, though on the night of their arrival their host by inadvertence omitted to introduce them to any of the other guests, 'so,' as Robert afterwards expressed it, 'we sat the whole time of dinner in the most formal manner you can imagine.'¹ When the company became better acquainted, the young man was gradually drawn out, and on all sides admitted to be a most agreeable companion. Lord Hertford was delighted with him, and at once wrote off to Horace Walpole describing his 'grandson Stewart' as 'a prodigy.' But the correspondent at Strawberry Hill did not share his lordship's enthusiasm (how could he? for he was seventy now, more than a trifle cynical, and in love with a young girl). 'I say to myself that prodigies are grown so frequent, that they have lost their name,' he replied. 'I have seen prodigies in plenty of late, ay and formerly too; but divine as they have all been, each has had a mortal heel, and has trodden back a vast deal of their celestial path!'² Hence Mr. Walpole begged 'to be excused from any more credulity,' though had he set eyes upon the subject of his kinsman's letter, it is possible that he would have spared him those harrowing reflections.

The courts and battlements of St. John's lay blissful in the autumn sunshine as a carriage drove up King's Parade and deposited a tall, pale, angular youth at the college gates. Robert (for it was he) followed the old porter through the Gothic archway to his rooms, and shortly afterwards he was formally admitted a fellow commoner of the society. At the same time he was informed that his tutor was the Reverend William Pearce, a don with his eye upon the neighbouring deanery of Ely, who, between the intervals of port and bad jokes in the combination room, instructed undergraduate members of the college in the elements of the classics, logic, and moral philosophy.³ Robert ate his

¹ R. Stewart to Lady Elizabeth Pratt, Oct. 28, 1786: Londonderry MSS; Alison, i. 10.

² H. Walpole to H. Seymour-Conway, Oct. 29, 1786: *Letters of Horace Walpole*, xiii. 415 (ed. Toynbee).

³ MS. Admission Register, St. John's College, Cambridge. The entry, which is in the handwriting of the College Registrar, is as follows:

first dinner in hall in the company of the other fellow commoners of his year, and watched with mingled awe and amusement the college barber appear at high table to powder the fellows' wigs.¹ He did not wait to see the candles snuffed, but retired early to his rooms, where he sat down at the writing table, 'this being the first night I ever spent in my own house,' to thank a fond aunt for her parting gift of some neckcloths.² And so with the taste of good college port still fresh upon his lips, and with high hopes of academic distinction in his new residence, Robert Stewart contentedly went to bed, a 'Johnian' at last.

Under the benevolent aegis of the Anglican Church the University of Cambridge was enjoying at this time an intellectual and cultural slumber, from which it was not to awake until the ripe scholarship of the Victorians had created a genuine regard for higher education. The professor of Divinity, for example, who in addition to his Chair held a Welsh bishopric, received £1,000 a year in remuneration, though he did not discharge any of his academic duties and never came near the university except to draw his salary. The idle and rich undergraduates commanded the slavish adulation of the dons. William Wilberforce, who was up at St. John's a few years before Robert Stewart, was actually encouraged in his idleness by some of the college fellows, 'because forsooth he was a talented young man of fortune and did not need to work to earn his daily bread.'³ Rank and fashion were predominant. The gentlemen of fortune, as noblemen and fellow commoners were called, dressed, ate and lived differently from the poor pensioners on the college foundations. Many of them did not matriculate so as to avoid being subjected to the vulgar restrictions of proctorial discipline. They wore gowns richly trimmed with gold or silver lace, and had caps ornamented with similarly distinctive tassels. They enjoyed the privilege of crack-

'Robert Stewart. Son of the Rt. Honourable Robert Stewart, Privy Councillor in Ireland, and Lady Sarah Conway, daughter of the Earl of Hertford; born in Dublin, Ireland; age 17; schools—first at Armagh, afterwards under Mr. Sturrock; admitted Fellow Commoner, Tutor Mr. Pearce, 26 October, 1786.'

¹ C. Wordsworth, *Social Life in the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century*, 225 (London, 1921).

² R. Stewart to Lady E. Pratt, Oct. 28, 1786: Londonderry MSS; Alison, i. 10.

³ Wordsworth, *op. cit.* 34.

ing their bottles and their jokes (if they had any) in the combination room. They might hunt or play tennis in preference to attending tutorial lectures and no comment would be made by the authorities upon their conduct, whilst the poor pensioner was 'often expelled for the most trivial offences, or merely to humour the capricious resentment of his tutor, who happens to dislike his face.' Such were the so-called 'empty bottles' who filled the mornings with idle chat, the afternoons with expensive sport, and the evenings with riotous debauchery. 'It would be endless to enumerate,' remarks Mr. Christopher Wordsworth, 'the privileges which these gentlemen enjoy by virtue of *hereditary talents* instilled into their *breeches' pockets*.'¹

Fellows and tutors alike entertained no scruples as to joining in their pupils' excesses. The Three Tuns Tavern was the scene of nightly orgies, at which heavy bills were incurred and afterwards as brazenly repudiated. Readers of Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* will recollect that it was from this resort that the actor Quin was carried home one evening at half-past eight 'with six good bottles of claret under his belt.' It was estimated that wine-drinking produced examination failures in the following proportions : Sherry 72, Madeira 27, Claret 23, Champagne 13, Port 90. 'Of late also hath beer contributed not a little to produce plucks,' said an acute observer, 'for indeed beer is a good thing for making the mind heavy and loaded.'² When the Duke of Newcastle was appointed Chancellor everyone was intoxicated on the evening of his installation. 'I make no exceptions,' wrote the poet Gray, 'from the Chancellor to Blew-Coat, that is to say the Chancellor's servant.'³ Gray further complained that 'the breaking of windows and riots in public parts of the town were indulged in to such an extent as to make Cambridge almost intolerable.' Gambling was stimulated by the pleasing propinquity of Newmarket, and duelling was only too frequent. Wilberforce, who spent much of his time in the fellows' company, confessed that on the very night of his arrival he 'was introduced to as licentious a set of men as can well be conceived. They drank hard, and their conversation was even worse than their lives. . . . Their object seemed to me to make and keep me idle.'⁴ Here,

¹ Wordsworth, *op. cit.* 31. ² *Id.* 257. ³ E. W. Gosse, *Gray*, 90.

⁴ R. and S. Wilberforce, *Life of William Wilberforce*, i. 10-11.

indeed, was centred all the restlessness of the impetuous youth which

‘ Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
To gallop through the country in blind zeal
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast of Cam
Sail boisterously, and let the stars
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.’¹

In spite of the prevailing atmosphere of academic lethargy and social dissipation throughout the university, it is only fair to state that towards the end of the eighteenth century St. John’s College was rising rapidly in reputation as one where the undergraduates were required to learn something and really did so.² It had, for example, already begun to produce mathematicians of the first order. This society was ruled by Dr. John Chevalier, a kindly, agreeable old man, who had for some time been ailing visibly and was now almost blind (he is chiefly remembered for his exciting election to the Mastership by a single vote and the stately procession which attended his funeral some fourteen years later). Under this mild *régime* Robert settled down without difficulty, and notwithstanding precarious health and a strong leaning towards scientific studies, he managed to digest the set portions of the classics, as well as the rather unappetising fare provided by Locke, Duncan, and Puffendorf.

Old Camden, who had some misgivings on account of the increasing popularity of mathematics, hastened to admonish the young man lest he should neglect the humanities. ‘ As to Greek and Latin, which I understood was to be the work of this term,’ he said, ‘ I imagine you want no tutor. Yet I wish you to make a point of studying that branch of literature because, though these languages are dead, you will form a taste for elegant writing from those authors much better than from any writing of the moderns. And I would more particularly recommend the Ancients to your perusal as they are the only instructors in the art of *speaking* as well as composition, the first of which must from your rank be your principal occupation when you make your entrance in the great world as a public character. I give you this hint because I am sometimes a little afraid from your strong propensity to the

¹ W. Wordsworth, *Prelude*, ii. 246-250.

² J. B. Mullinger, *St. John’s College*, 254.

sciences, you will possibly neglect the other which you will find hereafter to be more necessary though perhaps not so agreeable to your own inclination.’¹ Robert evidently paid heed to this advice, for when the time came for him to deliver his Latin declamation (which was required from each undergraduate once during the academic course), his performance ‘was in a very superior style.’² He read hard, so that Mr. Pearce could proudly record that his name invariably appeared in the first class at the half-yearly examinations for which he sat. In his studies he enjoyed the additional assistance of John Hinchcliffe, the Master of Trinity; for at the apparent instance of his patron, the Duke of Grafton, this staunch Whig scholar and renowned preacher (he was also Bishop of Peterborough) kept a watchful eye on Robert whilst the latter was *in statu pupillari*. It is therefore particularly gratifying to observe that everyone who remembered him in college testified afterwards ‘as to his gentlemanly appearance and manners, his diligence in study, and the propriety of his conduct in all respects.’³

Robert lived quietly at Cambridge and his expenses were moderate.⁴ It was better so, since the delicate state of his health prevented him from throwing himself wholeheartedly into the social life of the university. In any case, he was naturally of a shy and retiring disposition, and he did not mix easily with his fellows, though the few friendships which he did form during his undergraduate residence proved lasting. ‘Your rank will naturally introduce you to the acquaintance of noblemen and fellow commoners,’ his grandfather had told him. ‘You may find it worth while asking in a few, and I know your discernment will choose them. But I would wish you would look down among the pensioners, for you may depend upon it that all the genius and capacity to be found in the world are produced by that class of men.’⁵ How many of the latter he succeeded in meeting has

¹ Camden to Stewart, Nov. 1786 : Londonderry MSS.

² Rev. Dr. E. Bushley (Fellow and Tutor of St. John’s) to Lord Londonderry, Aug. 9, 1839 : Londonderry MSS.

³ Bushley to Londonderry, Jan. 30, 1840 : Londonderry MSS. : *Cast. Corr.* i. 5.

⁴ His expenses as an undergraduate were as follows : 1786-87, £142 4s. 1d. 1787-88, £253 17s. 0½d. 1788-89, £122 17s. 0d. (From Ledger MS. Book in Londonderry Estate Office.)

⁵ Camden to Stewart, Nov. 1787 : Londonderry MSS.

not been recorded, but we do know that his 'discernment' singled out in particular the Honourable Frederick Hervey, a younger son of the famous 'Earl-Bishop' of Derry; and this young man became his constant companion, in spite of Voltaire's cynical observation that in England there were three kinds of people—'*les hommes, les femmes, et les Hervé.*'¹ Hervey, who was shortly to be disinherited by his eccentric father for refusing to marry an illegitimate but rich daughter of the King of Prussia, also distinguished himself as a reading man, although in politics he was destined to achieve nothing higher than an under-secretaryship under Addington.² He invited Robert to his Suffolk home at Ickworth, where in spite of the very economical establishment which Lady Bristol was obliged to maintain on account of the Lord Bishop's extravagant hobbies in Ireland, the two friends contrived to meet the leading members of the large foreign colony at that time resident in the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds. Here, too, Robert met Hervey's sister, Louisa, a dark, attractive damsel of nineteen, who had been brought up with a care calculated indeed to make a proper impression upon such an eligible visitor as Mr. Stewart. Had not her mother lately discovered her reading *Clarissa Harlowe* and immediately 'tore out one letter of Lovelace a little too *descriptive* of the night he got into her room, tho' she got him out of it with prayers and entreaties without his effecting his purpose'?³ Although she could play the pianoforte to perfection and had an intelligent understanding of the *Iliad*, her charms made no more than an ordinary appeal to the visitor—her hand was reserved for another Robert.⁴

During the first short vacations Robert went to Ickworth or stayed with his English relatives, but the 'long vac.' was spent at home. Towards the end of May he set out for Holyhead, and

¹ W. S. C. Pemberton, *The Earl Bishop*, ii. 377.

² Frederick William Hervey (1769-1859), later Lord Hervey and 1st Marquess of Bristol. Succeeded Canning as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in 1801. On his father's death in 1803 he inherited the settled property of the Bristol family in England, in which the Bishop had only a life interest; but the vast Irish estates of Downhill and Ballyscullion, together with an unrivalled collection of antiques, went to a distant relative (Sir Henry Hervey Bruce, Bt.).

³ Pemberton, *op. cit.* ii. 378.

⁴ Robert Banks Jenkinson, later Lord Hawkesbury and second Earl of Liverpool. Prime Minister, 1812-1827.

on reaching Warwickshire he went two miles out of his way to see Shakespeare's shrine at Stratford ; for this exertion he considered himself ' well repaid,' and he was so much impressed by the inscription above the tomb that he afterwards transcribed it in the naïve hope that it might turn out to be ' the production of some Irish friend.'¹ Then he had four days in the Welsh hills, ' passing through that heavenly country along the banks of the Dee.' He did not omit to call on the two dear ' Ladies of Llangollen,' and he stayed several hours with them in their cottage. ' Our reception was the kindest possible,' he told his aunt. ' We left them with regret, very much entertained with the singularity of their mode of thinking, and surprised, as you were, with their perfect ease and unaffected manner with strangers.' Penmaen-Mawr looked so inviting that there was nothing to be done but to climb to the very summit, where he amused himself by rolling boulders over the edge. ' Nothing can be more magnificent,' he noted, ' than seeing them bounding down till at last all dashed to dust.' The surrounding scenery was delightful—' such was the enchantment that we could hardly force ourselves through it.'² In Dublin he found the ' season ' not yet over—there were plenty of routs, assemblies and debates in Parliament, not to mention the less elevating forms of entertainment provided by the cheerful court of his Grace the Duke of Rutland. And so back to Mount Stewart, and the unforgettable joys of a summer on Strangford Lough.

The autumn saw him up at St. John's again, a second year man now with some experience of the world. It was this term that a large-boned and clumsily-built youth with the smell of heather on his coat arrived at the college. He was fresh from the Cumberland dales, and he soon showed that he cared as little for the academic curriculum as he did for the ' chattering popinjays ' who were called fellow commoners. In his dreams he heard Spenser and Chaucer tell tales of ' amorous passion,' and in Milton's old rooms he ' poured out libations ' till his brain ' grew dizzy,' so that he was late for evening chapel on this the sole occasion of his undergraduate intoxication. The name of this odd

¹ Stewart to Lady E. Pratt, May 16, 1787 : Londonderry MSS. ; Alison, i. 11.

² Stewart to Lady E. Pratt, May 28 : Londonderry MSS. ; Alison, i. 10.

'northern villager' was William Wordsworth, and although the extent of his association with Robert is unknown, it is impossible that his gaunt figure should have escaped the other's notice, whether strolling out of his rooms in first court or walking in solitude through the 'level fields' of Cambridgeshire.¹

At all events they cannot have seen much of each other, since Robert was reading hard that term, and for some weeks an unpleasant bout of sickness kept him to his rooms. But he nevertheless astonished his friends at the half-yearly examination in December by being placed 'first in the first class.'² However, the effect of the self-discipline which he had apparently undergone was that his physique rebelled against the state of being 'immured at Cambridge plodding for fame.' There were further complications induced (so it is said) by a kick from a horse, so that he suffered what was considered to be a serious illness.³ His grandfather in alarm urged him to quit the University immediately and come to town for medical attention and a change of air. 'You shall return to college the moment I pronounce you safely cured,' Camden reassured him. 'At present the college life is too sedentary, and your mind as well as your body wants some relief. I must observe to you that though the college learning is very valuable, the society there is pedantic. You may study books at Cambridge, but you must come into the great world to study men.'⁴ Robert accordingly hastened to London and sought 'a solitary lodging' off Cavendish Square. After submitting his case to a doctor he was relieved to find that the malady was much less serious than he had imagined at first, and Camden thereupon confessed himself satisfied that it was not due, as he had feared, 'to some defect in your constitution,' but was simply 'no more than the usual consequence of a young man's indiscretion.'⁵

The cure took several months to complete, and during this period he had the advantage of being 'instructed by Lord Cam-

¹ W. Wordsworth, *Prelude*, *passim*.

² Bushley to Londonderry, Jan. 30, 1840: Londonderry MSS.; *Cast. Corr.* i. 5.

³ James Stuart: *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 23, 1822.

⁴ Camden to Stewart, Jan. 8, 1788: Londonderry MSS.

⁵ Camden to Stewart, Jan. 16: Londonderry MSS.

den himself.' ¹ In these circumstances he decided to forego the pleasures of 'John's' till the following autumn. Midsummer thus saw him on the road to Ireland, again paying his respects to his father's friends at Llangollen. The 'Ladies' received him graciously, and listened with rapt attention to the 'elegant language' in which he descanted upon the topics of the day—Herschell's 'wonderful discovery' of the planet Uranus, the trial of Warren Hastings, Lord Cornwallis's account of 'the dreadful state in which he left India,' the Duke of Bedford's engagement, and the Duke of York's stupidity. After this exchange of social pleasantries, he was shown the garden and farm where the cow Margaret had just calved a 'great son,' and Miss Butler noted with pleasure in her diary that the young man was 'quite delighted with everything.' ² He was indeed genuinely delighted, and he had an opportunity of proving it that very year. Whilst staying with his friend Hervey, he was introduced to Madame de Genlis, who chanced to be on a visit to Bury St. Edmunds, 'where there was daily to be found a very select society.' One evening the conversation turned upon friendship, and Mme. de Genlis said that she would willingly undertake a long journey for the sake of seeing two persons who had long been united by a sincere bond of this quality. 'Then, Madame,' spoke up Robert, 'you should go to Llangollen, where you will see a model of perfect friendship between two young women who are in every respect charming.' He thereupon proceeded to relate to the company the story of the 'Ladies,' and gave such an attractive account of their establishment that Madame determined to set out immediately for North Wales. She made this journey with her pupil, Mlle. de Orleans, and Robert provided them with a letter of introduction which ensured the travellers a most hospitable welcome.³

Somewhat loath he returned to Cambridge for another Michaelmas term. He found the place as unhealthy as ever, and it made him all the more anxious for a further taste of Mayfair society. He confided in his grandfather, and Camden with senile wisdom sought to point out the right path. 'I do not well see how you could change your residence for a year or two to your own advantage,' replied the old lawyer. 'Would you come to London and

¹ Stuart : *Belfast News-Letter*, loc. cit.

² *Hamwood Papers*, 105.

³ Comtesse de Genlis, *Memoirs*, iv. 288-92 (English ed., London, 1825).

plunge at once into all the profligacy and dissipation of this vile metropolis, or would your father be easily brought to give his consent to such a change? . . . There is one benefit in an university residence. You have not in any other place knowledge, and letters there are fashionable, where you are more likely to acquire a taste for books—than in London where the young men have forgot to read or write. I would not trouble you with this observation if I did not wish to have you produced into the world of men with better accomplishments than other men of fashion, as they are called. Your natural talents are excellent. Cultivation will make you perfect.’¹ But Robert after due consideration concluded that a university degree would not be worth the amount of physical and mental discomfort that he would have to undergo to obtain it, and he accordingly gave up all prospects of further academic honours. ‘The new year—that fateful year (1789) which began with the madness of an English king and ended with the fall of a French one—saw him back at Mount Stewart, and preparing to embark upon the stormy sea of local party politics.’²

3

A general election was due to take place in 1790, and already the rival interests in County Down had begun to align themselves. At this time the noble family of Downshire controlled both seats, and Lord Hillsborough, who as Lord Kilwarlin had defeated Robert’s father six years previously, again appeared as a candidate. This interest, which possessed by virtue of its leader’s powerful connection in England the support of Crown influence and Established Church, was determined to leave no means untried nor resources unspent to retain the representation. The opposing or so-called ‘independent’ interest, which had the support of the Whigs, the nonconformist bodies and the rapidly expanding linen manufacture, was equally determined to capture it and thus

¹ Camden to Stewart, Nov. 23, 1788: Londonderry MSS.

² Sir Archibald Alison says in his *Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart* (i. 10) that during the years 1788 and 1789 Robert Stewart made the Grand Tour, visiting ‘Paris, Geneva, Rome, Vienna and the principal European cities,’ but it is clear from his letters and memoranda that he did not pay his first visit to the Continent till the year 1791.



CHARLES PRATT, FIRST EARL CAMDEN
LORD CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND

1714-1794

From a portrait in the collection of The Most Honourable The Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.

prevent the county from becoming, as many feared it would, 'established as a borough in the hands of the profligate and corrupt Marquess.'¹ The elevation of Colonel Stewart to the dignity of a Baron, which took place that summer, deprived his 'independent' friends of his services as a candidate. But, as his lordship pointed out, the loss could be easily repaired. Why should not his son Robert stand in his place? True he was barely twenty years old, but then a dissolution was not expected till the following summer, when he would be of age. The suggestion appeared reasonable to everyone concerned. Robert (now 'the Honourable Mr. Stewart') was accordingly invited to discharge the somewhat invidious task of carrying the 'independent' standard into action. He accepted without hesitation.

The year 1789 passed uneasily. The States-General met for the first time since the reign of Louis XIV, the Bastille fell, and the mob marched out to Versailles to threaten a panic-stricken Queen. 'Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État?' asked Sieyès, and emboldened by the abbé's democratic reply two Belgian provinces revolted. London hammered successfully at the gates of Belgrade, and Spain attacked England at Nootka Sound. Washington became President of the United States of America. In Ireland the pension and honours list increased, and an unpopular viceroy resigned. Such were the principal items of news with which Robert was confronted at the outset of his election campaign, and, of course, like all candidates he was expected to comment with authority upon them. He opened the canvass with his father, and the two toured the county together, going as far afield as Newry, which they made their headquarters in the south. Here they did not omit to call on Dr. Drennan, and this physician (he had not yet deserted his respectable country practice for the whirlpool of revolutionary politics) was shortly afterwards recording: 'I dined with Mr. Stewart and think him very genteel, very well informed and very much what I admire.'²

The year 1790 began somewhere to the strains of *The Lad with the White Cockade*, as Robert continued patiently to go the rounds of his constituency. An election committee was formed on his

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, March 7, 1790: Charl. MSS.

² Drennan to McTier, Nov. 1789: Drennan Letters, 286 (unpublished).

behalf with a neighbouring landowner as chairman.¹ One of the most important duties of this body consisted in turning out literary squibs against their opponents. There was no need to mince matters, and Hillsborough was accordingly described as 'an absentee, a whoremaster, a pimp and an adulterer.'² But the Downshire faction was not perturbed, and concluded a cutting reply with the following quotation from Holy Writ: 'Go, boy, tarry in Jericho till thy beard be grown.'³

Apart altogether from his youth Robert was at a marked disadvantage by reason of the mode of his education, and many of the more extreme dissenting supporters of the 'independent' interests shook their heads ruefully over his candidature. 'Believe me, young man, I feel for thy situation,' wrote one of them. 'Thou hast been hurried prematurely into a business where success would be thy ruin. I am told that thou art a young man of promising abilities, and hadst thou waited till a proper season, mightest have made a respectable appearance in the political world; but thy precipitancy has brought upon thee much animadversion; thy enemies talk of thee freely, and thy friends have been backward in giving thee wholesome advice. . . . One thing is certain, if thou hast been educated a Presbyterian, there hath

¹ This committee consisted of the following gentlemen: Lord De Clifford (chairman), Messrs. Gawen Hamilton, Thomas Douglas, Francis Price, John C. Gordon, Nicholas Price, John Crawford, Alexander Stewart, Mathew Forde, Arthur Johnston, Mathew Forde, Jnr., Eldred Pottinger. N.B.—There is no truth in Madden's mischievous statement that Samuel Neilson, the United Irishman and founder of the *Northern Star*, was Robert Stewart's election agent (*Lives of the United Irishmen*, iv. 35, 2nd ed.). Neilson confined his activities at this election solely to the neighbouring county of Antrim. It is to be regretted that this error has crept into the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* (xl. 185) and other works of recognised authority.

² *Down Election Pamphlets, 1790*. This is a unique collection of 144 pamphlets, broadsides, squibs, poems, etc., compiled shortly after the election by the Rev. Edward Berwick, Vicar of Leixlip and domestic chaplain to Lord Moira (*Dict. Nat. Biog.* iv. 414). It was later acquired by Dr. Madden, and on his death it was purchased by the National Library in Dublin, where it is now preserved. It includes a list of the poll from day to day, together with the locality of voters' freeholds in cases where the latter were under £10 (as required by 26 Geo. III, c. 23 (Ir.)), which made the franchise for this class of freeholders conditional upon registration), and also 'black lists' of voters who had perjured themselves or taken bribes.

³ Letter to Robert Stewart from an Independent Elector: *Down Election Pamphlets*.

no doubt been strange methods taken to accomplish that end. A curate was at first employed to lay the foundation ; a rector was next engaged to superintend thy further progress ; and an English Bishop at the University of Cambridge had the direction of thy last studies. This was, no doubt, a likely method to make thee a learned man ; but many people will be found to doubt whether it was a proper one to make thee a *Presbyterian*.¹ On the whole, however, Robert met with the most marked expressions of goodwill during his canvass, and except in a few instances he succeeded in commanding the respect as well as the support of the Dissenters, whom he went so far as to harangue from the pulpits of their meeting-houses.² His good manners and polite conversation brought willing assistance. A noted supporter, the Reverend William Steele Dickson, a Presbyterian minister, rode one horse almost to death and reduced another to half its value in the young man's service.³

There was now a third candidate in the field, by name Edward Ward (also an Honourable—he was a younger son of Lord Bangor).⁴ As this gentleman was not looked upon with disfavour by the 'independent' party, overtures passed between him and Robert, and eventually a junction was formed against Hillsborough 'to the joy of all good people and the terror of evil doers.' They chose as a motto the significant words 'Honour and Honesty,' which by contrast with their opponent's was considered to reflect most faithfully their conduct and policy.⁵ Their colours were blue and buff. (Hillsborough somewhat inappropriately donned orange.) One circumstance proved of the greatest assistance to this partnership. A Whig Club had lately been established in Dublin by Charlemont and Grattan with the object of obtaining parliamentary reform by constitutional means, and in grateful imitation of this body a Northern Whig Club was founded in Belfast by Charlemont's friend, Alexander Haliday, a

¹ Letter to Robert Stewart from a Quaker : *Down Election Pamphlets*.

² *The Observer*, Aug. 18, 1822.

³ Dickson, 20.

⁴ Hon. Edward Ward (1753-1812), second son of 1st Viscount Bangor of Castle Ward, County Down. He was related to Robert Stewart through his grand-aunt Mary, who married Thomas Stewart of Ballylawn. See above, p. 9, and Appendix I.

⁵ Haliday to Charlemont, March 7, 1790 : Charl. MSS.

local physician. Robert Stewart and Edward Ward were amongst the original members, and they attended the first general meeting in Belfast. This gathering, which was patronised by a number of the most respectable county gentry, 'went off excellently,' in the founder's words. It was resolved thereat to submit a 'test' to all parliamentary candidates, to which the latter would be required to subscribe before receiving the club's support at the election; this bound them if successful to vote *inter alia* for a Place Bill, a Pension Bill, the disenfranchisement of revenue officers, the reform of parliamentary representation, and 'a Bill to protect the personal safety of the subject against arbitrary and excessive bail.'

A sumptuous dinner followed these consultations, and Robert joined with the other patriots in drinking to 'President Washington and the United States of America'; 'A Happy Establishment to the Gallic Constitution'; and most radical of all, 'Our Sovereign Lord the People.'¹ It should be remembered, of course, that Robert Stewart, in associating himself with these democratic expressions of opinion, went no further than such constitutional Whigs as Fox in England and Charlemont in Ireland, neither of whom entertained any objections to the principle of monarchy, and who in their eulogies of Mirabeau and the pioneers of revolution in France had little thought that events in that country were leading to the execution of the King and Queen, the confiscation of private property and the supremacy of a deist. Nor could the demands of the 'test' be called revolutionary, though it was scarcely surprising that when the document was submitted to Hillsborough his lordship should have refused indignantly to sign it. On the contrary, Hillsborough trusted to his family influence and his own exertions, and he rode about day and night 'moving heaven and earth and hell for his salvation,' though Dr. Haliday somewhat maliciously observed that for the first of these powers he relied chiefly upon his father, the old Marquess of Downshire, 'who is much given of late I hear to witching and praying, living much alone and preparing (as he says) for another world.' Meanwhile his two opponents flaunted their streamers and cockades of blue and buff, and paraded the streets of Downpatrick at the head of a large body of the Northern

¹ Joy, *Historical Collections*, 342.

Whig Club—'the procession was numerous,' said Haliday, who was among the spectators, 'and had the best people of the town for character and fortune to a man in it.'¹ Charlemont was considerably elated by this news. 'The county of Down, not Downshire, now indeed affords a glorious prospect,' he wrote to his friend, 'and I will not allow myself to harbour a doubt that its perfect emancipation is at hand.'² But the two 'independent' champions had an even greater object than this to fulfil, for in announcing their junction to the public they declared that 'we are embarked upon a much more interesting and glorious cause than our success as individuals—we are called forth as instruments in your hands to *emancipate the country*.'³

In view of the interest attaching to this contest, a pause may be made here to note very briefly the principal features of a county election in Ireland.⁴ Like England each county was represented in the Irish House of Commons by two members known as 'Knights of the Shire,' who were chosen as such in the county court. As in England the basis of the franchise, which had been established in the reign of Henry VIII, was the 'forty shilling freehold'; that is to say, to entitle him to vote every elector must own freehold land in the county to the annual value of forty shillings. To this, as in England, there was one important qualification—Roman Catholic freeholders could not vote, nor could they be elected.⁵ Like England also it was a greater distinction, by reason of the landed interests represented, to sit for a county than for a borough, and Knights of the Shire possessed several peculiar privileges not enjoyed by other members. Unlike England, however, no property qualification was necessary for a seat in the Irish House of Commons, so that Robert Stewart could not at this moment have stood for an English county unless he had first acquired some separate estate. Unlike England, too, there was not in Ireland any tax-paying electoral qualification

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, April 7, 1790: Charl. MSS.

² Charlemont to Haliday, March 24: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 122.

³ 'Address to the Electors of County Down': *Belfast News-Letter*, April 30, 1790.

⁴ On the following see particularly Porritt's *Unreformed House of Commons*, ii. 201-217.

⁵ Roman Catholics were denied the franchise from 1727 to 1793, and were incapable of serving in Parliament from 1691 to 1829.

superadded to the freehold.¹ But if the Irish county franchise possessed the great advantage of being uniform, as opposed to that in the boroughs, it possessed the equally great disadvantage of being subject to a vast amount of manipulation upon which the incapable legislature in Dublin never succeeded in placing an effectual check. The methods employed by territorial magnates to secure the return of their nominees varied. The most frequent and notorious was to create fictitious electoral qualifications by the fraudulent conveyance of freehold land ; thus landlords were enabled to produce large numbers of fresh voters at will.² Small wonder that Wolfe Tone pointed out as a national disgrace ' the wretched tribe of forty shilling freeholders whom we see driven to their octennial market by their landlords as much their property as the sheep and the bullocks which they brand with their names.'³ Parliament sought to make the registration of freeholds under the value of £10 compulsory and to enforce oaths as to their nature upon the tenants, but the statutes were easily evaded and perjury openly committed.

The progress of the election was often extremely slow, since, in addition to the freeholder's oath, voters whose religious persuasion was in doubt had to take the oaths of abjuration, allegiance and supremacy if called upon to do so. Another cause of delay was the frequent challenging of freeholders who were suspected of marrying ' papist ' wives, a charge which if proven deprived the freeholder of the right of disposing his vote. Upon the term ' freeholder,' needless to say, the widest construction was put, and so it came to include trustees, mortgagees, schoolmasters, town clerks, and holders of ecclesiastical benefices. It was considered no disgrace for parties to resort to bribery, though the candidate on whose behalf it was practised was supposed if he suffered detection (which, in fact, rarely occurred) to be incapable of sitting in the House. Riots were deliberately organised by the

¹ ' In England a county elector could not vote unless the land tax had been paid in respect of the freehold which qualified him. There was no land tax in Ireland ' : Porritt, ii. 217.

² It is curious that the first mention of this practice occurs in County Down at the election for the Parliament of 1640, on which occasion ' divers sham freeholders are said to have been created by great families in order to increase their number of choosers ' : Hill, *Montgomery Manuscripts*, 417.

³ Cited Lecky, iii. 13.

side in danger of defeat. Poll-books were mutilated or destroyed in order to hasten the result, and other forms of pressure were directed against the sheriff for the same purpose. It is not surprising that sheriffs were often markedly partisan, and it is on record that one of them so far forgot his duties as presiding officer at the poll that he arrested voters who came forward to support the candidates whose rejection he desired and 'threatened many others by showing them a bundle of writs and outlawries, and by other means deterred them from giving their votes.'¹

Lever's well-known account of such an election in *Charles O'Malley* was based on personal experience: his words need no elucidation:

'In the goodly days I speak of, a county contest was a very different thing from the insipid farce that now passes under the name. . . . Voters were some thousands in number, and the adverse parties took the field far less dependent for success upon previous pledge or promise than upon the actual stratagem of the day. Each went forth like a general to battle, surrounded by a numerous and well-chosen staff; one party of friends acting as commissariat, attending to the victualling of the voters, that they obtained a due, or rather undue, allowance of liquor, and came properly drunk to the poll; others again broke into skirmishing parties and scattered over the country, cut off the enemy's supplies, breaking down their post-chaises, upsetting their jaunting cars, stealing their poll-books and kidnapping their agents. Then there were secret service people, bribing the enemy and enticing them to desert; and lastly, there was a sapper-and-miner force who invented false documents, denied the identity of the opposite party's people, and when hard pushed provided persons who took bribes from the enemy, and afterwards gave evidence on petition. Amid all these encounters of wit and ingenuity, the personal friends of the candidate formed a species of rifle brigade, picking out the enemy's officers and doing sore damage to their tactics by shooting a proposer or wounding a seconder—a considerable proportion of every leading agent's fee being intended as compensation for the duels he might, could, would, should, or ought to fight during the election.'²

All these devices appear to have been employed in a greater or less degree by the parties and their supporters at the Down Election of 1790.

It was not generally expected that the election would take place

¹ *House of Commons Journals (Ireland)*, ii. 648.

² Charles Lever, *Charles O'Malley*, chap. xi.

till the autumn of that year, but Government, with the object of shaking the strength of the Opposition in the country, suddenly decided to anticipate it ; hence Parliament was dissolved early in April. Polling in Down commenced on the first of May, at which date, it should be noted, Robert Stewart was under the age legally required of a candidate. Proceedings opened early in the morning at Downpatrick before the Sheriff's court, which was packed with freeholders. The nominations of Hillsborough and Ward were received without comment, but when the name of Robert Stewart was proposed a freeholder objected on the ground that the candidate was not of age. However, after hearing argument by counsel the Sheriff wisely ruled that he did not consider his court competent to decide such an issue, and he thereupon entered the objection in the poll-books. A further interruption was caused by the appearance of some members of the Northern Whig Club, who produced their 'test,' to which they invited the candidates to subscribe their names. The two 'independents' immediately did so without saying a word ; Hillsborough in refusing his signature stigmatised it as 'unconstitutional for any club or any party to attempt to shackle their representatives and deprive them of every power of deliberation.' The order of polling was then discussed. Hillsborough declared his intention of voting equal tallies separately with each of his opponents on account of their junction against him, but the opponents proceeded to dispute very strongly the propriety of this course. The difficulty was eventually solved by the appearance of a certain Captain Mathews, a fellow-officer and friend of Hillsborough, who offered to redress the balance by joining the noble lord as a candidate, and as soon as his nomination had been received the Sheriff declared the poll open.¹

Outside on the hustings all was bustle and noise and seeming confusion, for here the voting took place in full view of the public. Loud cheers went up as each fresh detachment of voters arrived, and soon the street was blocked with carriages. Squire, cottier, tenant farmer and attorney-at-law jostled one another in their eagerness to obtain a glimpse of the fun. Soon rotten eggs began to fly, and many a sound pate went home cracked. When this

¹ Downpatrick, May 1, 1790,—'Hasty Sketch of the Proceedings this day on the Hustings': *Down Election Pamphlets*.

procedure had continued for some days the candidates discovered that in practice it was not possible for them to maintain their respective junctions. The reason was that a number of freeholders brought forward on Stewart's tally insisted on splitting their votes between Stewart and Hillsborough, whereas some on Hillsborough's tally insisted on voting for Hillsborough and Ward. Hence at the end of a fortnight Hillsborough was leading Stewart by 130 and Ward by 220 votes, while the remaining candidate was well to the bottom of the poll.¹ Hillsborough was now leaving no means untried in his efforts to obtain votes and divert them from the opposing side. Consequently the 'independent' interest suffered beyond the expectations of many of its supporters; they did not reckon, for instance, upon the 'unwarrantable' decision of the Sheriff's officer in Bangor which deprived them of 'near two hundred *good* votes' on the local registry. However, notwithstanding these tactics, the faithful Dr. Haliday was able to state that 'the junction sticks with perfect purity to their motto "*Honour and Honesty*"—their opponent might take for his *Per fas aut nefas*, or he might leave out the *fas* to shorten it and make it more to the point.' 'All the arts of deceit and seduction,' he continued, 'the weight of bribery, the allurements of promises, the terror of threats, the guilt of perjury are all in action without a blush, nay, with exultation. Add to this the treachery of agents, the hired industry of bailiffs and tithe farmers, the countenance of Government, the sedulity of the revenue people great and small, the pious exertions of the Church, perhaps the overflowings of the Treasury from the sale of peerages! What a horrid but too faithful picture!' ²

The new Parliament had been summoned to meet early in July, but as the time drew nigh and freeholders had not yet ceased to appear on the hustings in Down, it became clear that no returns for that county could be made before the commencement of the session. At length on the sixty-second day of the poll Hillsborough, though he was leading well, found himself unable to make up his tallies, and Robert's friends redoubled their exertions. By this time Ward was nearly 150 votes behind his partner, and considering therefore that he had now no chances of success he

¹ 'Lists of the Poll': *Down Election Pamphlets*.

² Haliday to Charlemont, June 19: Charl. MSS.

announced his intention of declining to poll further. Hillsborough immediately saw in this gesture an opportunity of striking a decisive blow at his younger opponent, whose defeat he desired much rather than Ward's. He accordingly offered to poll on the latter's behalf the second votes of his remaining freeholders (instead of for his own colleague Mathews, who was now out of the running), a proposal which, if it had been accepted, would undoubtedly have turned the scales against Robert, since the votes in question amounted to over seven hundred.¹ But Ward, to his credit, considered this overture as an insult, and promptly insisted on retiring from the contest. Votes on behalf of the other parties continued to be received for some days longer, till finally on the sixty-ninth day of the poll neither was able to produce a tally. The poll was then closed, the votes were checked, and the result was officially declared as follows :

Earl of Hillsborough	-	-	-	3,534
Honourable R. Stewart	-	-	-	3,114
Honourable E. Ward	-	-	-	2,958
Captain G. Mathews	-	-	-	2,223

The Earl of Hillsborough and the Honourable Robert Stewart were accordingly returned to serve in the House of Commons as Knights of the Shire for the County of Down.²

Although the spoils of victory were evenly divided between Londonderry and Downshire, the absolute right of one family to control the parliamentary representation of the county had in fact been successfully challenged. Writing immediately after the announcement of the result to thank Lord Moira for his support, Robert reflected in his remarks the peculiar conditions in which this contest was conducted. 'Our election this day ended,' he said, 'not with that triumph we first expected, but still I trust with credit to the Independent interest. Many unforeseen accidents abridged our numbers, but nothing, not even Lord Hillsborough, could detach us from each other. Mr. Ward has acted with spirit and honour. He considered Lord H's preference

¹ Cp. Hillsborough's subsequent declaration that 'though Mr. Ward rejected me . . . yet had he chosen it, I would have brought him in instead of Mr. Stewart without a few days of the close of the poll.' Downshire to Clanwilliam, Oct. 1793 : Downshire MSS.

² *H. of C. Journals*, xiv. 60. Slightly different figures are given in the *Belfast News-Letter*, July 22, 1790.

as an insult and insisted that he should cease to support him, which his lordship next day acquiesced in. We owe you, my Lord, infinite obligation for your protection—support so warmly and so honourably conferred is really flattering. Your tenantry with some exceptions acted as you wished them. Perhaps it may be necessary to make those who from interested motives opposed your wishes feel your resentment. Such conduct when overlooked serves to increase that inattention to the landlord's recommendation.' ¹ At the same time he took care to make a suitable public acknowledgment of his sense of gratitude to his supporters as a whole, though on this occasion he unfortunately allowed himself to be carried away rather too far in the intoxication of success. 'I speak the language of my heart,' he asserted, 'when I declare that I derive more real satisfaction and glory from the testimony of affection, zeal and attachment which I have received from the noble, the virtuous, and the independent during the course of this arduous contest, than from the success with which it has been ultimately crowned,—to talk to *you* even of *duty* were to hold a language inadequate to my feelings! I *love* the cause of the people—I revere the constitution—and I will maintain and defend both with that ardour and affection which a youthful heart dictates, and which your generous confidence demands.' ²

4

The new member for the county had good reason to congratulate himself upon his achievement, but when the first flush of success had cooled, and he came to consider the precise mode of conduct which his extraordinary election required him to pursue in Parliament, he was not altogether satisfied with his position. He asked his grandfather how he would act were he similarly situated. 'The true question,' replied Lord Camden characteristically, 'is not what an old man would, but what a young man ought to do. You have now spent a vast sum, and have endured an intolerable fatigue both of body and mind to obtain a seat in Parliament for the county of Down. This is now passed and I think ought not to be followed with repentance. The worst circumstance, the

¹ Hon. R. Stewart to Earl of Moira, July 21 : Londonderry MSS.

² Letter from the Hon. Robert Stewart to the Independent Electors of the County of Down, July 26, 1790 : *Belfast News-Letter*, July 27.

expense, may be repaired with economy, in which you ought to bear your part. The others, now they are over, are matters rather of pleasant reflection that may furnish you with stories for the next seven years.' The minister, however, did not feel justified in making any definite suggestions as to Robert's future plans until he had first ascertained the wishes of his father. 'I am not sure I know what tempted him to engage in this contest with so much eagerness,' he continued. 'Was it ambition simply to be acknowledged by the county upon the bottom of his own property and character, or had he a secret design to secure your residence in Ireland by seeing you in a character that would insure your continuance there, though privy to the fact that a necessity would grow by custom into a voluntary habit? I am inclined to think that this last was at heart one of his motives. If it was it behoves you to consider very seriously what resolutions you should force your mind to embrace upon this subject. And I rather inculcate this advice, because I am not sure whether the compulsion of a fixed residence in Ireland is not the secret cause of your discontent.'

The old man had guessed right. Robert was indeed contemplating with feelings of anything but unmixed pleasure the prospects of his present situation. The truth was that when at Cambridge and later in London he had come to entertain a whole-hearted admiration of the political life of England and the talents of the Prime Minister, and with that dissatisfaction so frequently accorded to youthful endeavour by its author he began to wish that he had obtained a seat at Westminster instead of College Green. His father was not unnaturally of a different opinion, and Camden observed that as Londonderry's wishes must after all form the major consideration, he should therefore remain in Ireland for the present. 'But perhaps the best answer of all,' he added, 'is that you are by your birth, your family, your peerage, and your property so annexed to that country that you can carry nothing out of it but your own person and leave behind you all those respectable appendages that ought to accompany a man to make him a leading figure in society.'¹

The Irish Parliament only sat for a fortnight in July to pass a vote of credit for the threatened war with Spain, after which it

¹ Camden to Stewart, Oct. 16 : Londonderry MSS.

adjourned for six months. Robert was consequently able to spend the remainder of the year at home recovering from the strain which his recent activities had imposed upon him. Here again his grandfather came forward with the best advice, and was most emphatic as to how he should properly employ his time in his constituency. 'Neither do I think it reasonable to expect that after Parliament is up,' he said, 'you are to return into the country and get drunk five times a week till the House meets again. This is downright lunacy. To be as much as you like in the country and no more, to visit and be visited, to treat your friends with a proper respect, and to give them no cause to think they are neglected or despised, is no very difficult task. If they expect more they expect too much and ought not to be indulged. But if they will not vote for you at the next election, then you save your money and come in for Lisburne.¹ And yet perhaps the conduct I have suggested may secure your popularity better than the other mode of living constantly with these gentlemen, for men oftentimes become members by too general a familiarity. Besides the Irish are captious and quarrelsome, especially when they are in liquor.'²

Indeed Robert had plenty of interests which required attention during this intervening period. First and foremost there was the cost of the election to be met. The expenses in this connection were known to be immense. They amounted to the traditional figure of £60,000, thus almost equalling Wilberforce's election bill when he contested the county of Yorkshire in 1807.³ It was arranged that the aggregate payment of this sum should be spread over a number of years, but the most pressing liabilities were immediately discharged by the sale of the family house property in Dublin, as well as his father's magnificent collection of books

¹ Lisburn. A pocket borough in County Antrim which belonged to his grandfather, Lord Hertford.

² Camden to Stewart, Oct. 16 : Londonderry MSS.

³ His brother Charles is the principal authority for this figure : *Cast. Corr.* i. 7 ; but it is possible that his statement is the result of a misunderstanding, since according to the account books in the Londonderry Estate Office the amount stated to have been paid out on this election is only £6,069 2s. 7d. : MS. Accounts Journal, 1791-1803. Some of the items in the list of expenses are interesting, e.g. 'Cost of Prosecution for Perjury £54 2s. 7d.' 'Pat Connor's wife for her Acct. Cockades £25 5s. 5d.'

and pictures.¹ For the family perhaps the most unfortunate result of the contest was that the completion of the mansion house at Mount Stewart, of which only the west wing had then been built, had to be postponed indefinitely. In fact, the house as Londonderry had planned it was never finished during the lifetime of either himself or his eldest son ; and the former, who continued to reside there with his wife and eleven children, is said to have suffered considerable discomfort in such confined quarters.²

However, when the two set out for Dublin to attend the opening of Parliament, his lordship reflected (and Robert agreed with him) that these disadvantages were easily outweighed by the benefits likely to accrue from their mission.

¹ Sept. 27. The conveyance was not actually completed till the following year : March 14, 1791. See Deeds 426/150 and 437/129 in Registry of Deeds, Dublin.

² Charles Vane, Marquess of Londonderry, *Memoir of Viscount Castlereagh* : *Cast. Corr.* i. 7, Note.

CHAPTER III

PARLIAMENT IN COLLEGE GREEN

A JOURNEY to Dublin from the north by coach or on horseback was no light matter in those days, especially when the roads were blocked with snow, as they mostly were in the winter of 1790-91. That Robert accomplished it without mishap is clear from contemporary letters, though according to a diverting but fictitious anecdote he travelled by sea from Portaferry, narrowly escaped shipwreck in a storm, and had several adventures on the Isle of Man whither his vessel was driven for repairs.¹ He reached Dublin not long after the beginning of the new year. The house in Henry Street had not yet been sold, and this was to be his principal residence during the parliamentary session. Its front windows looked out upon a busy thoroughfare, along which passed on their way to the Parliament House those members and their friends who preferred to live in the still fashionable neighbourhood of Rutland Square.² At the back there was a fair-sized garden which extended as far as Prince's Street, and beyond that but for a few clumps of houses there was the broad river Liffey moving darkly in its turgid current from Leixlip to the sea.

In an Irish winter all roads led to the capital, for Dublin had now reached the zenith of her social and architectural splendour. Parliament, University, Royal Exchange, Four Courts, and Custom House were the chief monuments which the energy of the age had erected to public works, and a long series of English viceroys had gladly given their names to the streets and squares laid out during their rule—Ormond, Pembroke, Bolton, Dorset, Grafton, Har-

¹ Biographical Sketch of the 2nd Marquess of Londonderry : *Observer*, Aug. 18, 1822 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 73 ; Reede, *Private Life and Character of the Marquis of Londonderry*, 12.

² Carlisle Bridge (now O'Connell Bridge) was not built till 1793, so that persons formerly coming from Sackville Street could only reach College Green by way of Henry Street, Capel Street and Grattan Bridge. Later in the year he moved into lodgings in North Great George's Street.

court, Carlisle, Rutland and Westmoreland, each marked fresh municipal extensions in the eighteenth century, indicating at the same time the tenor of social orientation. All seemed well in the age of the fanlight, the sedan chair, and the back-scratcher. Fine gentlemen dined and fought duels, whilst their equally fine ladies practised the minuet and were seduced by gallants. The link-boys shouted and the flambeaux burned fitfully on frosty evenings, as the chairmen set down their precious burdens at the Rotunda and Charlemont House. It was, in truth, a gay society in which Robert Stewart found himself, and he was not slow to realise how lightly the so-called rulers of the country conceived their duties. With breakfasts in Trinity and *rendezvous* in Stephen's Green or the North Circular Road, where the latest 'intelligence' from Holyhead and Parkgate was hourly discussed, the mornings passed all too quickly. In the afternoon the House met for business (rarely before 4.0 p.m.), and with a kindly consideration for members' appetites usually contrived to adjourn before dinner. Then began the seemingly interminable round of routs, assemblies, and less edifying spectacles, and the coach wheels rolled long into the night. 'There is a very good society in Dublin in a Parliament winter,' observed Arthur Young. 'A great round of dinners and parties, and balls and suppers every night of the week, some of which are very elegant.'¹ It was small wonder that young Valentine Lawless found Dublin at this period one of the most agreeable residences in Europe. 'There were no conveniences belonging to a capital in those days which it did not possess,' he wrote in his old age. 'Society in the upper class was as brilliant and polished as that of Paris in its best days; while social intercourse was conducted with a conviviality which could not be equalled in France.'²

But it should be remembered that there were two Dublins, whose vastly differing features brought the lines of social division into sharp and harsh relief: the Dublin of College Green and Phoenix Park, polite and fashionable—and the Dublin of the 'Liberty' slums, mean and wretched. In spite of its aristocratic lustre and extravagance, poverty and decay showed themselves everywhere on the face of the capital. 'This is the most dirty,

¹ A. Young, *Tour in Ireland*, i. 20-21 (ed. Hutton).

² Lord Cloncurry, *Personal Recollections*, 217.

the most gloomy, the most stinking, and the ugliest city I ever was in,' wrote a distinguished member of the viceregal suite in 1772. 'Most of the streets are narrow ; all that are paved are paved like the most neglected and unfrequented streets of London before the improvements ; several are half-paved only ; many not at all. Added to this every kind of filth is thrown into the deep stream of black mud that flows gently through the town ; so you may imagine what a villainous place this is. Half the inhabitants are in absolute rags, and one-third of them without shoes and stockings, and almost naked. There are no flat improvements for foot passengers, therefore I shall never attempt walking in the streets : and you cannot stop in a carriage without being surrounded by such crowds of importunate beggars, that, compared with Dublin, the towns in Flanders are in that respect free from these nuisances.'¹ As can readily be imagined, a mob composed of these savage elements was as fickle in its affections as that of Paris. It was, however, always a factor to be reckoned with in a period of crisis, as Robert Stewart was subsequently to discover to his cost, though he must already have known something of its behaviour from his father, who had had some experience during the agitation for the repeal of the commercial restrictions. 'Yesterday about twelve o'clock,' wrote an observer at this period, 'the mob rose and assembled to the number of three thousand or four thousand in College Green, from whence they sent out detachments to execute their vengeance on such Members of Parliament as they chose. A very great body of them ran to the Four Courts in search of the Attorney-General to assassinate him ;² they broke into the sitting of the courts ; but the Attorney-General having just previous notice enough, made his escape to the Castle Yard, where finding that another party of the mob had gone to pull down his house, he made what haste he could with a guard of soldiers and a magistrate to save his wife and house from destruction. . . . During the whole of this time the mob was increasing in College Green, and seizing every member as he came to the House, and forcing them to swear that they would vote for a Short Money Bill and God knows what besides ! Some

¹ Lord Nuneham to W. Whitehead, Dec. 1772 : *Harcourt Papers*, iii. 116.

² John Scott, later Lord Clonmell and Chief Justice of King's Bench.

members were much pulled about. . . .'¹ These outbursts occurred frequently, and they had long caused the upper classes to entertain a consummate contempt for all demonstrations of popular feeling. That such an unstable proletariat should ever participate in the government of the country was unthinkable—even among the extreme radical set in Charlemont House. 'I am no friend to the Irish aristocracy,' wrote an Englishman who was resident in Ireland during the closing years of the century. 'And though I think what Grattan said of them (that they are only fit to carry claret to a chamber-pot) is true, I think better of them than of any Irish democracy that could be formed.'²

The government of the country was conducted through the local Parliament, a body nominally independent but in reality controlled by the Crown. From 1497 to 1782 the Irish Parliament had by virtue of Poyning's Law been entirely subordinate to the English legislature, but in the latter year this and other objectionable statutes had been repealed as the result of an extraordinary national outcry, and Ireland, in Grattan's view, was at last a nation. However, the gentle art of ruling with the aid of paid parliamentary majorities continued unchecked. The House of Commons consisted of three hundred members, and in the year 1790 over one-third of that number was in receipt of salaries or pensions from the Treasury.³ Nor was it always easy to control this official phalanx. It was only two years previously that the Lord-Lieutenant had regretfully informed the English minister that an important government measure had been held up by their concerted action. 'We were forced to adjourn on Saturday night,' he wrote, 'having only gone through half the Bill, because all the Crown servants (most of whom had spoken early in favour of the Bill) had got drunk at the coffee-house, and at midnight were loud in every part of the House abusing it.'⁴ It was not much wonder that Robert Stewart had pledged himself to support the movement for Parliamentary Reform, and he did not treat this

¹ J. Beresford to Robinson, Nov. 16, 1779 : *Beresford Correspondence*, i. 75.

² R. Griffith to T. Pelham, Oct. 8, 1798 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33,106).

³ *Irish Parliamentary Register*, x. 412 (Speech of Sir Lawrence Parsons).

⁴ Marquess of Buckingham to Lord Grenville, Feb. 1788 : *Dropmore Papers*, i. 305.

pledge carelessly. 'We have a House of Commons,' he observed at this time, 'in the returning of which the people exercise but a small share of power, upon whose conduct they have no control of any sort. The wholesome influence which well extended elections might give is totally lost. The majority are either the pensioned servants of the Crown or the servile followers of great parliamentary chieftains.'¹ The 110 boroughs which each retained two members had been for over a century in the hands of the landed aristocracy, and most of them were as 'rotten' as Gatton and Old Sarum in England—for instance, the site of Bannow in County Wexford was a mountain of sea sand without a single inhabited house: yet this borough was represented in Parliament by as many members as the capital itself.² The principal borough owners were the powerful families of Downshire, Beresford, Ponsonby and Ely, who at the beginning of every session bargained with government for their support, and whose nominees were in consequence compelled to vote as their patrons directed. John Beresford, the famous First Commissioner of Revenue (the Custom House is his monument), probably possessed the greatest influence if not the largest following in Parliament and the country. Had he not made 'a Lord Chancellor, a Chief Justice of the King's Bench, an Attorney-General, nearly a Primate and certainly a Commander-in-Chief'? And had he not 'the law, the army, the revenue, and a great deal of the Church' under his control? He was commonly known as the 'King of Ireland,' since, as he himself observed, 'no Lord-Lieutenant could exist without my power.'³ Less powerful borough owners either sat themselves in the House or else hired or sold their seats to lawyers and others who were free to make their own arrangements as to votes and office. Only in the cities and counties was there occasionally any approach to popular election, but here too, as has already been seen, territorial influence was still predominant. The keynote of the government system was therefore corruption, which increased in direct proportion to the embarrassments of the Crown. Robert Stewart put the matter clearly. 'The vices of our government are for

¹ Stewart to Haliday, Feb. 27, 1792: Londonderry MSS.

² Porritt, ii. 187.

³ Beresford to Auckland, Jan. 9, 1795: *Beresford Corr.* ii. 51.

the most part intermittent. When great political questions arise, great political depravity prevails. In the common routine jobs rather than enormities are observable. Upon the whole I think our government unnecessarily expensive. I think situated as prerogative now is, Administrations are liable to be betrayed into criminal acts which they themselves condemn and are disposed to resist, but the power of individuals is stronger than their resolution. I should wish to see the representatives better constituted, and the Crown less capable of abusing its trust, by having its prerogative ascertained and its patronage defined.' ¹ The pension list had now grown to over £100,000 a year, and it contributed to the support of individuals whom no stretch of imagination could connect with Ireland. The Sardinian Ambassador at the Court of St. James's received an annual grant of £1,000 from this source, whereas the Queen of Denmark, whose only merit was that she had been justly expelled her kingdom for having committed adultery with one of her subjects, received thrice that sum.² Every year witnessed the addition of new names to the number of tide waiters, alnagers, park rangers, and collectors of customs, whilst the fortunate holders of these offices were paid handsome salaries for the discharge of redundant duties which they never performed.

2

The date fixed for the opening of the national Parliament was January 20, 1791. On that day Robert Stewart donned his silk knee breeches and smoothed his lace cuffs with some pride, for full dress was the custom on such occasions. As his carriage left Henry Street and passing slowly along Capel Street crossed Essex Bridge into Parliament Street, he eagerly scanned the crowds who had been waiting since early morning for the viceregal procession and were now hailing their favourites as they approached.

For half a century past Ireland's legislators had met to deliberate in College Green. They were fortunate in possessing such handsome and commodious quarters, for in spite of a few minor freaks of architecture the Parliament House was one of the finest

¹ Stewart to Haliday, Feb. 27, 1792; Londonderry MSS.

² Lecky, ii. 72, 118.

public buildings in Great Britain.¹ Arthur Young, when he visited Dublin in 1776, had considered its spacious apartments, which included committee-rooms, lobbies, a library, coffee-rooms, and a court of requests, as 'much beyond that heap of confusion at Westminster';² and John Wesley, who made his tour a few years later, had been agreeably surprised at the 'noble room' in which the Commons assembled: 'It is an octagon, wainscoted round with Irish oak which shames all mahogany, and galleried round for the convenience of the ladies.'³ As Robert Stewart entered this chamber maybe he fancied, like another new member, Jonah Barrington, that he could see his 'forefathers ranged upon those seats which they had so long and so honourably occupied in the senate of the country, welcoming their descendant to that post which had not for a few years past been filled by any member of the family.' Like Barrington, too, Robert cannot have been displeased at finding himself 'an equal in a circle of legislators whose good breeding, wit, and conviviality were mingled with political and general information.'⁴ When it is remembered that of these gentlemen over one-third in number were pensioners or placemen, and that the whole assembly was an exclusively Protestant body primarily representative of the propertied classes, it is not surprising that those who sat on and behind the Treasury Bench were socially on the most amicable terms with members of the Opposition, and that the two should frequently dine and wine together. But if Blaquiere, Beresford, Cooke, Langrishe and Parnell showed their talents to greater advantage in the dining-room and corridors than in the body of the House, there were others such as Grattan, Curran, Hely-Hutchinson, George Ponsonby and Plunket who effectually contributed to make the Irish Parliament perhaps the most eloquent debating society in the world.

In due course the faithful Commons were summoned to hear the Lord-Lieutenant's Speech from the Throne, and as Robert joined the throng behind the Speaker at the bar of the Upper House, he was spellbound by the scene before him. The House

¹ R. Pool and J. Cash, *Views of Dublin*, 28-29 (Dublin, 1780).

² A. Young, *Tour in Ireland*, i. 17 (ed. Hutton).

³ J. Wesley, *Journal*, iv. 337 (London, 1829).

⁴ J. Barrington, *Personal Reminiscences*, 95-6 (London, 1876).

of Lords with its Corinthian pillars and decaying tapestries was packed to overflowing with members and their friends. A few he knew by sight. His father looked gorgeous in his robes and coronet among the Barons. The handsome peer bowing to His Excellency was the new Lord Chancellor, Fitzgibbon. Snatches of the Speech reached his ears :

‘ My Lords and Gentlemen . . . negotiations with Spain . . . care of agriculture, trade and manufactures of this Kingdom . . . my co-operation . . . prosperity and happiness to Ireland . . . ’¹ There, standing not many paces away, was that burly fire-eater, Mr. Beauchamp Bagenal, who had fought a prince, jilted a princess, abducted a duchess from Madrid, got drunk with the Doge of Venice, scaled the walls of a convent in Italy, escaped the Inquisition at Lisbon, and returned to Ireland to become a county member and shoot the Lord-Lieutenant’s Chief Secretary in Phoenix Park.² There was ‘ Buck ’ Whaley, who had just won a bet of £15,000 that he would walk to Jerusalem, play handball against the walls of the Temple, and be back in Dublin again within two years, taking only eight months to do it.³ There was Sir Boyle Roche whose ‘ bulls ’ were the talk of the town—had he not lately begged the House to extend clemency to a postillion who had been condemned in heavy damages as the result of an action for *crim. con.* brought by a certain noble peer, his employer ? ‘ And what, Mr. Speaker, was this poor servant’s crime ? ’ he had pleaded. ‘ After all, sure Mr. Speaker, it was only doing *his master’s business by his mistress’s orders !* ’⁴ And there was Lucius O’Brien . . . and there was . . . In short, a unique assembly.

A few days later Robert noticed with some annoyance that a petition had been laid upon the table of the House from a number of freeholders in County Down praying for the issue of a new writ for the election of Knight of the Shire in his place, on the ground that at the time of his election he was a minor and therefore incapable of being returned to Parliament.⁵ A day was fixed for trying this delicate question, and after some delay the House proceeded to the appointment of a Select Committee to hear the

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xi. 1-3. ² Barrington, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, 110.

³ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* lx. 394. ⁴ Barrington, *Personal Reminiscences*, 115.

⁵ *H. of C. Journals*, xiv. 59.

petition. On the day agreed the petitioners stood at the door of the chamber with their counsel, as a committee of fifteen members was chosen by ballot.¹ The best English barristers had been briefed to argue on behalf of the petition, but Robert felt sure, like old Camden, that 'this last effort of Downshire's will succeed no better than his other attempts.'² Indeed, the committee found it impossible to resist the argument that if he was a minor when the poll commenced, the Hon. Mr. Stewart had certainly come of age before the result was declared, and the petition was accordingly dismissed with costs.³

Now that he was *de jure* as well as *de facto* a member of Parliament, there immediately arose the problem of the proper line of conduct for him to pursue having regard to all the circumstances of his election. In this, too, he consented to be guided by his grandfather's counsels. 'My advice to you,' said Camden, 'is rather to be upon the reserve, except upon those questions where you are pledged. Upon other matters rather to be undecided in conversation, for men often commit themselves in their common discourse, especially if they are heated with wine and the company in good humour with each other. Therefore never be open over the bottle—a rule easier prescribed than observed, for you know it is the property of that liquor to unlock and lay open the most impenetrable minds. Nevertheless all men understand that you mean to be independent. If you mean to speak be sure you understand the question and then you will never want matter for a reply.' Finally the minister threw out the cautious suggestion: 'Would there be any harm in professing yourself a friend of the Pitt administration in England, though you are in opposition to the Castle?'⁴ It was a clever piece of advice, and his *protégé* had the good sense to act upon it. About a month after the opening of the session, a debate was initiated by Grattan on Ireland's right to trade with the East, and Robert Stewart chose this occasion to deliver his maiden speech.

By an Irish Revenue Act the East India Company had been granted a monopoly of the supply of tea to Ireland, and all mer-

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xiv. 295.

² Camden to Stewart, Jan. 23, 1791: Londonderry MSS.

³ *H. of C. Journals*, xiv. 388. The costs amounted to £412 9s. 1d.: Estate Office MSS. (Accounts Journal *sub* March 7, 1791).

⁴ Camden to Stewart, Jan. 23: Londonderry MSS.

chandise imported by the Company had to be shipped through London. As Grattan and his disciples on the Opposition benches pointed out, a large sum of money was spent annually by Ireland on the purchase of East Indian commodities at what were artificially high prices ; so that the confinement of this trade to one concern was very injurious to Irish commerce. Furthermore, the direct trade with China and the Far East from which Ireland was totally excluded was so lucrative that it was generally felt throughout the country to be a gross injustice to deny her its benefits. Grattan therefore moved for a committee of enquiry to report on any legislative provisions in existence which might 'prevent this country from receiving the full benefit of her free trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope and the Straits of Magellan.'¹

In rising early in the evening to support this motion the new member for County Down took care to observe that had the motion been one against the expediency of preserving the British trade monopoly in the East he would be more ready to oppose than support it. But this motion was of a very different kind.

'It was a motion for enquiry. Enquiry was the foundation of knowledge, and every such motion would always receive his most hearty support when the enquiry was not plainly mischievous or nugatory. From the proposed enquiry no ill was likely to result, and on a subject of great importance no enquiry would be nugatory, and therefore it should meet with his fullest concurrence.'

He went on to make it clear that although he supported the Hon. Member's motion, he must not be understood to pledge himself to either side of the general question. He thought that the question should first be fully considered in committee, and that those most likely to give information on it should be examined at the bar.

'His wish was that the subject should be fully investigated, and afterwards he hoped the House would determine, not with a spirit of local partiality, but as a member of the British Empire ; and that their determination, whatever it might be, should be the result of a fair and full determination, and not the effect of a blind submission to any man.'

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xi. 220 (Feb. 21). Hobart to Nepean, Feb. 22 : H.O. Ireland, 32.

Then, still bearing in mind Camden's advice, he concluded this short speech by paying a few neat and well-thought-out compliments to Pitt and the honesty of his intentions.¹

It was a creditable first effort, and later in the debate he had the pleasure of hearing Isaac Corry, a tried parliamentary hand, congratulate him and refer to the 'ability and caution' which he had displayed in it. However, in spite of its simple logic, the old 'Castle' arguments prevailed—namely, that the existing system was part of the price which Ireland paid to England for the preference that was accorded to her corn, for the monopoly enjoyed by her linen, and for the protection of her coast by the English fleet. At two o'clock on the following morning the question was put, and lost by 146 votes to 85.² A few weeks later a similar motion was introduced by George Ponsonby, but fared no better.³ The excellent impression which his maiden speech had made led to Robert Stewart on this occasion being chosen by the Opposition to act as a teller for the minority with the Honourable Proposer. At the same time he delivered his sentiments on the question before the House at somewhat greater length than before, strongly urging honourable members, should they believe as he did that government intentions were good, to court rather than shun the enquiry. 'If the monopoly of the East was still to be conceded to Britain, the principles on which that concession is made should be known—but if these principles are concealed by resisting the enquiry, public distrust must be the consequence.'⁴

Although he only spoke twice during the session, the new member for Down was constant in his attendance at the House.⁵ Dr. Drennan, who now practised in Dublin, was very pleased that he should be attending to his election pledges so conscientiously, for indeed Robert went into the Opposition lobby at every division. 'He is certainly a most promising young man and one of the handsomest in the House,' noted the Doctor, who saw him from the gallery, adding with a curious touch of prophetic insight,

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, March 1, 1791. This speech is not reported in the *Parliamentary Register*.

² *Parl. Reg.* xi. 247.

³ *Id.* 298. The voting on this occasion was : For 86, Against 143.

⁴ *Parl. Reg.* xi. 291.

⁵ His name does not appear in the list of fines for non-attendance : *H. of C. Journals*, xiv, *passim*.

'perhaps to become one day the most able.'¹ But the Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary in the Castle were not so pleased, and it was not long before a letter was despatched to Whitehall complaining of such ungrateful behaviour in the son of a peer who had been so recently honoured.² 'There were points upon which the disagreeable contest in which he was engaged had pledged him,' wrote the Chief Secretary, Major Hobart. 'Upon those subjects I always conceived he *must* vote against us; and he did so without *opening his lips*. Upon the East India business he was not pledged; but he nevertheless thought proper not only to vote but on both occasions to speak at large upon the business; and on the first question accompanied his vote by a long panegyric on Mr. Pitt. This conduct needs no comment.'³

If he had not advanced his prospects, Robert Stewart had at least succeeded in attracting official attention.

3

It was a dull and uninspiring session on the whole, and, thankful it was over, at the beginning of June Robert went on board the Holyhead packet with the intention of spending the recess on the Continent. It was to be a Grand Tour—not so extended perhaps as was customary (was it not the year 1791, and had not the French royal family just fled from the capital of their kingdom?), but still an excursion which required a paternal blessing as well as a banker's draft. Posting through the vale of Llangollen, he stopped to pay his respects to the 'Ladies,' and observed with satisfaction as he resumed his journey that they 'seemed to take that interest in the French Revolution which all the world must feel in an event so uncommon.' He had informed them with some misgivings of the elaborate plans which the leaders of the Northern Whig Club were making to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. 'They are as unreasonable in this as in offering the Regency to the Prince,' he said, and went on philosophically to confess that should a 'tumult' ever banish him from

¹ Drennan to McTier, Feb. 5 : Drennan Letters, 299 (unpublished).

² Grenville to Westmoreland, May 7 : *Dropmore Papers*, i. 581.

³ Hobart to Grenville, Feb. 22 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 35.

Ireland, 'I propose, if you give me encouragement, rebuilding Dinas Bran's old Castle and becoming your neighbour.' As soon as he reached London he sent them a copy of Burke's *Reflections* and a pamphlet by Calonne to stimulate the laudable interest which they had shown, and after spending a few days with the Camdens he departed for Spa, where he expected to be 'in the way of receiving the earliest intelligence and of meeting the leaders of the aristocratic party.'¹

In taking his leave Robert promised his grandfather to send any news he could collect on the subject which 'at that moment beyond all others was interesting and must continue to be so till its issue finally arrives.' This promise he redeemed in two extraordinary letters whose texts fortunately have been preserved.² Haliday, who subsequently read them, confessed himself astonished with the powers of observation and reflection and the extensive grasp of mind which they displayed. 'I do not know that they can add to your lordship's knowledge concerning the French Revolution, and the present state and prospects of that nation,' he told Charlemont, 'but I know, they added much to mine. *Son coup d'essai fut un coup de maître*, some French poet says; and in this instance that master was just two and twenty.'³

As he had anticipated, Robert found on reaching Spa an extensive circle of *émigrés* 'aristocrats,' to which he seems to have had no difficulty in gaining admission. Their 'perpetual theme of conversation' and 'the chief support of their drooping hopes' was the chance of restoration with the aid of foreign arms. 'It was impossible to convince them,' he wrote in his first letter two months later, 'that matters never could be reinstated as they formerly were; that they must be satisfied with a degree of power short of what they formerly possessed; that to escape disappointment they must moderate their views. Misfortune had not sufficiently mitigated their pride to make such a doctrine acceptable.'⁴ At the same time he saw clearly that though the *ancien régime* could never be re-established, the present system was so imprac-

¹ Stewart to Lady E. Butler, June 25: *Hamwood Papers*, 272-274.

² *Charl. Corr.* ii. 145-159, 162-176. The copies of these letters, which were presented to Charlemont by their author, are preserved with the rest of the Charlemont MSS. in the Royal Irish Academy.

³ Haliday to Charlemont, Jan. 19, 1792: *Charl. MSS.*

⁴ Stewart to Camden, Sept. 1, 1791: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 153.

ticable and full of errors that sooner or later there must ensue a complete reaction against it.

‘ That the fervour of popular spirit will subside, and the nation feel themselves disappointed in the blessings they expect from this new constitution, I have no doubt. When men have long felt the miseries of despotism, and when the prejudice which reconciled them to it is no more, the first impulse of the mind is to exult in the idea of liberty. The novelty of possessing freedom, even in the abstract, to them is perfect happiness. But when the delirium a little abates, which former oppression and theories concerning the rights of man have produced, they will insensibly forget the tenets of this metaphysical code and judge the merits of their constitution by its practical effects. The old system, of which not a trace remains, will at least furnish a standard to measure its comparative excellence. . . .

‘ At this moment the French nation are by no means in possession of cool judgement. Their minds are heated by ideas, which from their novelty intoxicate. Hitherto slaves, they now feel their own power. Those phlegmatic spirits, whom a love of liberty might not have influenced into action, have been conciliated either by an increase of pay, the destruction of superior ranks which wounded their pride, or the abolition of some obnoxious tax. With men not much accustomed nor sufficiently experienced to look beyond the present moment, these expedients have fully answered the purpose of those from whom they proceeded ; but once possessed their charm will gradually fade, and their attention will be called off to the permanent provision which those in power have made for the government of the country. . . .’¹

He proceeded to examine in detail the internal administration of France, explaining how in his opinion it failed effectually in the three essentials of good government—the adequate protection of personal liberty, the public recognition of individual rights in property, and moderate taxation. In particular he dealt with the complex problem of currency and credit, noticing that the issue of assignats, which had first been used to liquidate demands upon the government, now operated as a medium of exchange throughout the country.

‘ Notwithstanding the quantity [of assignats] issued the circulation at this moment is excessively embarrassed. The difficulty of transacting all the trifling barter of the Kingdom with this paper money is inconceivable. Lately they have fabricated assignats of five livres ; before these appeared fifty was the lowest denomination. A gentleman told me that at Paris when he went to a *table d’hôte*, in paying for his

dinner he found it impossible to obtain change for an assignat of fifty livres without first giving a considerable premium. He was obliged to lodge the note with the man and eat it out. The same happens with every tradesman you employ. If you have a draft on a banker he will pay it in paper; if you wish to have cash you must pay nineteen per cent. in order to obtain it. If any confusion should arise, either from intestine commotion or the appearance of a foreign army, the discount will increase prodigiously. It will fluctuate with the prospect of the parties, and a sudden panic seizing the people may alone strip them of every degree of currency which the confidence of the nation has given them. Such an impediment to the sale of commodities would have gone nigh to ruin totally the manufactures of France, if a partial remedy had not grown out of their distresses. The course of exchange is so wonderfully against them that foreign merchants sending goods into France find themselves obliged to receive payment in the productions of the country, so great would be the loss were they to bring it back in money. This circumstance, by keeping that vast body of men in employment, renders the national distress more tolerable. Such is the state of the revenue of France;—the machine of government propelled and the public credit kept alive by an expedient which may forsake them in the first moment of danger and can only afford a temporary relief supposing their tranquillity secure. . . .

‘ . . . Their currency depends upon the quantity in the market and the confidence of the people. If more than what the circulation of the Kingdom can absorb is sent forth, their value will instantly fall; it is a commodity the redundancy of which cannot find its way into other countries. Consequently the price must be regulated by the demand at home. When the sale of the Church lands is completed and there remains no longer any obvious means of realising them into some possession of more permanent value, much of their estimation will be lost and their resource to government be proportionably diminished.’¹

His second letter was written some six weeks afterwards from St. Germain, in ‘ the solitude of a French ale-house, which offers no other society than the landlord who commands a company of the National Guards.’² He described the changes which had taken place in the church, army, revenue and local government, and he adverted to the composition and conduct of the National Assembly. On his way from Spa to Paris he had been at pains in each department through which he passed to ask for a list of its representatives in the legislature, together with their profes-

¹ *Charl. Corr.* ii. 150-1, 154.

² Stewart to Camden, Nov. 11 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 176.

sions and qualifications. 'The number of representatives from each varied,' he noted, 'according to their population and contribution, from twelve to fifteen with scarcely an exception. I found three-fourths of the number men educated to the law, but in general they were of the lowest class, principally attornies, few advocates of any character. The remaining fourth usually consisted of a description of men, usually *laboueurs*, which is a sort of better farmers, with a curate or two occasionally mixed. But the Church seemed to have been completely driven out of the field by the Bar ; it evidently appeared that the gentlemen of the robe possessed unlimited sway and that the influence had decidedly fallen into their hands.' ¹

In spite of the prevailing elements of disorder in it, the National Assembly contained some men of talents who made a very real impression upon his mind when he came to attend some of the sessions. Fouché he pronounced 'eloquent' (he was to see more of him at closer quarters, though not for nearly twenty-five years). In fact, he found that a very high standard of public speaking was set by the French. The self-confidence displayed by the deputies amazed him. 'They are totally free from any degree of *mauvaise honte*. They rise for the first time to speak in the Assembly with more confidence than our oldest debaters. Added to this they have an inconceivable fluency of language. They never hesitate ; having the idea it seems to clothe itself in expression. Perhaps the nature of their language may account for this. It is a language of phrases. There are scarcely two ways of expressing the same idea with equal propriety. The man who speaks correctly has little room to choose. Habit makes the phrase present itself with the turn of expression, and instead of casting about as we do for language, the moment he thinks it offers itself spontaneously.' ²

His conclusions in the political development of the country indicate clearly the formation of a cautious and balanced judgment :

'From what I have said you will not rank me amongst the enthusiastic admirers of the French Revolution as the noblest work of human integrity and human wisdom. I really am not. I discover in what they have done much to approve and much to condemn. I feel as strongly

¹ *Charl. Corr.* ii. 164.

² *Id.* ii. 165-6.

as any man that an essential change was necessary for the happiness and for the dignity of a great people, long sunk in a state of degradation. I lament that those into whose hands the fate of their country devolved aimed at accomplishing so much more than could be effected at once without introducing confusion, from a suspension of civil government, and more, I am inclined to think, than ever can be realised in such a kingdom as France without perpetually risking her tranquillity. If I could do it without seeming to approve the principles professed by their leaders, principles which I shall ever condemn as tumultuous pedantry tending directly to unsettle government and ineffectual in its creation, I should on all occasions worship and applaud the feeling which led the way to this unparalleled change. . . .

' . . . I do not, I assure you, wish their principles to gain ground anywhere. I am convinced they are unsafe, and I trust that no country in which I have either stake or affection will follow their example.' ¹

Such principles had already gained considerable ground in Ireland, as Camden warned his grandson that they would. 'I am afraid your Kingdom has caught the spirit of the National Assembly,' said the old minister. 'You remember a famous epitaph of a man who killed himself with physick. *I was well, I wanted to be better. I took physick and died.* I wish your countrymen would make the application.' ²

4

It was not an age of political caution. The proceedings in Ulster which marked the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille fully confirmed Robert's strictures on the 'unreasonable' behaviour of the Northern Whig Club.³ The 14th of July was proclaimed as a day of general rejoicing. The Volunteer Companies marched through the streets of Belfast in their old strength with banners flying and drums beating, followed by almost the whole of the Whig Club wearing uniforms and green cockades. 'Our procession was truly splendid,' reported Haliday.⁴ A portrait of Mirabeau and a gruesome picture of the Bastille dungeons full of victims 'chained to the earth in the most tortur-

¹ *Charl. Corr.* ii. 172-3.

² Camden to Stewart, Jan. 23 : Londonderry MSS.

³ See above, p. 80.

⁴ Haliday to Charlemont, July 23 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 141.

ing attitudes ' were borne along triumphantly, while the partially shackled figure of Hibernia was represented in the act of receiving the image of Liberty from a Volunteer artilleryman. In the evening three hundred and fifty-four patriots sat down to dinner in the Linen Hall, where the National Assembly of France and Washington, Lafayette, Mirabeau, and Grattan were toasted amidst a tumult that shook the foundations of the building.¹

It was in the year 1791 that Tom Paine published his *Rights of Man*. Copies were plentifully distributed throughout Ulster, and it soon became the most popular book in Belfast. The northern Presbyterians, who constituted the most ardent of the supporters of parliamentary reform, had always been inclined to republicanism, and they had lately shown signs of uniting with their Catholic neighbours in the south and west in the hope of obtaining the abolition of all religious disqualifications such as had taken place in France. This latter tendency was strongly encouraged in a pamphlet which appeared about the same time under the signature of ' *A Northern Whig*.' The author of this was a young Protestant lawyer named Theobald Wolfe Tone. He was twenty-eight years old, and the life of mingled adventure and dissipation which he led had so far been noted for an elopement and a wild project (ridiculed by the English Government) of founding a military college in the South Sea islands. From the beginning he was dissatisfied with the arm-chair radicalism of Charlemont and the other members of the Whig Club, whom he felt were ' not sincere friends of the popular cause.'² One day in October he led a few friends to the summit of a gloomy rock above Belfast known as Macart's Fort, and on this hallowed spot each man present swore never to rest till Ireland should be free. ' To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England (the never-failing source of all our political evils), and to assert the independence of my country—these were my objects,' he wrote shortly afterwards in his journal. ' To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions, and to substitute the common

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, July 19, 1791. Froude in his *English in Ireland* wrongly concludes that Robert Stewart took part in these festivities (*op. cit.* iii. 21).

² Cited Lecky iii. 16. From a letter of Tone's intercepted by the Government in the same year.

name of Irishman for the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter—these were my means.’¹

Thus was founded the first society of United Irishmen. Perhaps the most ludicrous falsehood of the many which have been circulated by his enemies was that Robert Stewart became a member of this revolutionary organisation.² Indeed, the very month in which it was born saw him expressing very different views on the state of Ireland from those of Tone, for in his second letter from France he could not resist the temptation of discussing recent developments in his own country.

‘The government of it I do not like ; but I prefer it to a revolution. There is great room and necessity for amendment, and our connection [with Great Britain] would not be weakened by it. The people begin to grow very impatient, the abuses are considerable, and their weight nothing. The Catholics are calling for emancipation. I dread a coalition between them and the dissatisfied Protestants. If tumult then should arise, it will be difficult to establish the government afterwards to their exclusion. I am afraid reform will be postponed till it is too late. . . . It is impossible not to admit the imperfections of the constitution, and it is a bad reason to give for preserving them that the people of Ireland are not fit to be entrusted with the freedom Great Britain enjoys lest they might misuse it, that the connection between the two countries must be preserved by abuse, and that they must be contented to live in subordination and corruption. It requires a great deal more political penetration than a discontented Irishman is generally blessed with to comprehend such refinements. . . .

‘If Ireland should be convulsed, I trust with the assistance of Great Britain she may escape many of the distresses France is doomed to suffer, and that an affectionate attachment to each other is so decidedly the predominant feeling of both that it will ever by an instinctive impulse perpetuate their connection.’³

¹ *Autobiography of Wolfe Tone*, i. 50-1 (ed. O'Brien).

² This charge is believed to have been invented by Daniel O'Connell. See *Life and Speeches of O'Connell* by his son at p. 178 (Address to Catholic Meeting in Dublin, June 18, 1812). It was repeated with variations by the rebel James Hope in his *Autobiography* as follows : ‘Lord Castlereagh had the address to get into the confidence of a United Irishman named James Breese, who afterwards suffered death in '98 ; by taking the test or oath of the society he was put in possession of all the secrets of the society that Breese was acquainted with, by which means he could weigh all the other secret information he received, and find out proper agents for any purpose he might require.’ Madden, 3rd Series, i. 24 (1st ed.). Like most of Hope's statements of fact, this is based on hearsay and is quite worthless.

³ Stewart to Camden, Nov. 11 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 173, 175.

The French Revolution, which had thrown England for the moment into alliance with the leading Catholic powers in Europe, gave an added stimulus to the national demand for Catholic emancipation, or at least for the repeal of the more obnoxious features of the Penal Code. Edmund Burke, the Irishman whose *Reflections* had lately proved him to be the ablest political writer since Swift, threw his weight on to the Catholic side. In an open letter to the popular revenue commissioner Sir Hercules Langrishe, which appeared early in the following year, he strongly urged the necessity of winning over the Catholics to the side of Government by means of concessions, instead of leaving them to ally with the Dissenters and endeavour to force the question by violent methods. At the same time the Catholic Committee in Dublin, which had hitherto been composed of the heads of a few old Catholic families and some prelates, was reorganised on a democratic basis: Edmund Burke's son Richard became its secretary, and it forthwith transmitted a petition for relief to the King. Pitt and his ablest colleague Dundas were generally in favour of concessions on Burke's grounds, and in England a substantial measure of relief had already been granted.¹ Fitzgibbon, Beresford, and the borough owners as a whole were resolutely opposed to any concessions, while the Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary were far from encouraging. It was originally Pitt's intention to extend the franchise to the Catholics in Ireland, but this had to be abandoned on account of opposition from the 'Castle,' and before the Relief Bill was finally allowed to go forward it was shorn of many of its other attractive features which had been designed for it by the English Cabinet. It was introduced into the House of Commons by Sir Hercules Langrishe, and in spite of the lukewarm official support it received in Ireland it became law in the same session. It permitted Catholics to practise as solicitors and junior barristers (they were still excluded from the inner bar and the bench), and repealed the old laws against the inter-marriage of Catholics and Protestants, the education of Catholic children, and the apprenticeship of Catholic youths to trades. These concessions not unnaturally fell considerably short of general expectations. The passage of the bill was significantly accompanied by a petition from the whole Catholic body praying

¹ Mitford's Act, 1791.

for 'some share in the elective franchise,' and a petition from the Protestant United Irishmen praying for the repeal of all the Anti-Catholic laws. The summary rejection of these petitions by Parliament did much to cement the alliance for which Wolfe Tone was working.¹

5

Throughout the session of 1792 Robert Stewart discharged his obligations to his constituents by voting with the Opposition at every division except where he did not consider himself bound by his pledges to do so. However, Lord Westmoreland, the Lord-Lieutenant, remained dissatisfied. 'As I conceive my Lord Camden ought to be responsible for this gentleman's conduct,' he told Grenville, the Home Secretary, early in the session, 'pray make a terrible grievance to his lordship about it. Perhaps if the ingratitude is handsomely stated it may have an effect.'² But Grenville in enquiry was inclined to take a lenient view of the case. 'I have the strongest assurances from Mr. Stewart's connections of his real desire to give support, where he can do it consistently with the engagements to which his contest forced him,' he replied. 'As long as he professes his intention, and I really believe he has it, you will probably think it worth while to pay him some attention notwithstanding occasional opposition.'³ At the same time the English minister threw out a hint to the Chief Secretary that after all perhaps something might be done for the young man. 'I am desirous to mention to *you* particularly,' he informed him, 'that at the beginning of the session he expressed himself much pleased with some attention of yours, and that his friends are persuaded that you might contribute very much to fix him in the right way.'⁴ Major Hobart's answering letter left no room for doubt as to the official view taken of the case in the Castle. 'I should have felt a real pleasure in contributing to fix in the *right way* a young man certainly of talents and of very pleasing manners,' said the Chief Secretary. 'But let the representation of his con-

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xi. 231. Lecky, iii. 22-62.

² Westmoreland to Grenville, Feb. 5, 1792 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 28.

³ Grenville to Westmoreland, Feb. 16 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 35.

⁴ Grenville to Hobart, Feb. 15 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 35.

duct be what it may, take my word for it he is a decided enemy of the King's Government in Ireland ; and perhaps a more dangerous one from the circumstances of his English political connections being such as to warrant his *professing* himself a warm friend of Mr. Pitt's administration in England.'¹ Westmoreland wrote in much the same strain. 'I have no hopes of Mr. Stewart. He uniformly votes against us ; and a declaration of goodness to Mr. Pitt's government is more injurious, as you know opposition with pretended willingness is worse than decided. . . . I am afraid it will be of no use in you to speak or we to write about it, and we must both submit to what we can't help. Mr. Stewart seems a promising young man and, if he turn out able, may hereafter speak with effect the sentiments of the north.'² Grenville expressed regret at this continued hostility to the Irish administration, but felt that in the circumstances 'nothing more can be done about it' ;³ and so the matter was allowed to rest.

In the same session the East Indian trade question came up again on a motion of George Ponsonby for leave 'to bring in a Bill to repeal every law which prohibits a trade from Ireland to the countries lying eastward of the Cape of Good Hope.'⁴ Although he had supported the motion for enquiry in the previous session, Robert Stewart felt that such a sweeping measure as was now proposed ought not to be passed without some equivalent advantage being accorded to England at the same time ; as this *quid pro quo* did not appear on the face of Ponsonby's motion he therefore voted against it. He did not deny Ireland's right to trade with the East, but simply doubted the prudence of claiming to exercise it in the manner suggested at that moment when the East India Company was struggling against hostile interests. 'I never will suffer the rights of Ireland to seduce and drain from Britain that vital principle which upheld her greatness and enabled her to support her burdens,' he said with a mercantilist air, though he took care to add, 'nor will I ever lend the rights of Ireland to British merchants as a cloak for fraud and injustice.'⁵ Charlemont wrote him a letter of congratulation upon his speech

¹ Hobart to Grenville, Feb. 22 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 38.

² Westmoreland to Grenville, Feb. 24 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 36.

³ Grenville to Westmoreland, March 4 : *Dropmore Papers*, ii. 38.

⁴ *Parl. Reg.* xii. 87.

⁵ *Parl. Reg.* xii. 92.

on this occasion. Commencing with the admission that he found his arguments 'strong and weighty,' the veteran Whig went on :

'You do me justice in supposing that I perfectly agree with you in your sentiments respecting the caution which every Irishman should observe where the interests of Great Britain are essentially endangered. Indeed it is improbable that in this particular he should dissent from you whose first and dearest wish has ever been the freedom of his country and his second the perpetuity of her connection with the sister Kingdom. It always has been and ever will be my opinion that no project for the particular advantage of Ireland ought to be pursued if the general interest of the Empire of which she is a part should be essentially injured by it, and this sentiment is, I am convinced, not only liberal but perfectly wise. But then take notice that this liberality ought to be mutual and its effects reciprocal. Has that hitherto been the case? Surely no, and perhaps especially in commercial matters never will be. All traders are jockies, and England is indeed a *knowing one*.'¹

But in spite of the fact that Robert Stewart continued to the end of the session, as the Chief Secretary complained, 'uniform in his encomiums on the English administration and equally consistent in his opposition to us,' his attitude to the East India question caused some misgivings among the more independent of his constituents and friends. Charlemont warned him particularly to be on his guard in his 'northern conversations.' 'I do not wish you to speak what you do not think,' he said, 'but I do most sincerely wish that your sentiments coincided with those of the majority of your constituents. Remember the excellent precept of Lord Camden—that English politics should be totally forgotten by an Irish member of Parliament.'² Dr. Drennan was not so flattering. 'Robert Stewart votes now with the majority,' he wrote at the time of the East India trade debate. 'He is a half-blooded fellow and one of those whom Junius calls the meanest of the human race. The Conways have their share in him. How will the Down countrymen like this or Dr. Haliday?'³ Drennan's anticipation of Haliday's shock was correct. But curiously enough at the very moment that the United Irish leader

¹ Charlemont to Stewart, April 7: Londonderry MSS; *Charl. Corr.* ii. 384-5.

² Charlemont to Stewart, March 31: Londonderry MSS; *Charl. Corr.* ii. 385.

³ Drennan to McTier, Feb.: Drennan Letters, 322 (unpublished).

asked this question, Robert was busy explaining his position to the Northern Whig Club secretary. The letter which he wrote on this occasion has been discovered among the Londonderry archives ;¹ and the following remarkable extracts, which treat of his political opinions *vis-à-vis* those of his constituents, are now published for the first time :

‘ MOUNT STEWART, 27th February, 1792.

MY DEAREST DOCTOR,

I was excessively gratified by the letter you were so kind as to send me. It was written with all the talent and candour inseparable from the author. I am impatient to thank you for the communication, and have every disposition to do it at considerable length that the difference of our ideas may be ascertained. . . . In dissenting from an authority so much respected, I must distrust tho’ I cannot surrender my own ideas. To the former I am less inclined to bow, however my electioneering interests may be involved in conciliating general approbation. I have too long observed the miserably contracted view of things upon which the conclusion of a majority of the people of this country are frequently formed to give them any other influence on my conduct than that which Reason must always impose on a mind ready to embrace Truth wherever it presents itself. . . .

‘ . . . I do not wish unnecessarily to declare opinions uncongenial to theirs. That is a species of political knight errantry which sincerity never can impose ; but still less do I incline to conciliate or rather to deceive by partial declarations, which when not accompanied and perused with the context admit of misrepresentation and subject the writer afterwards to charges of inconsistency. . . .

‘ As to my propensities being *quite too English*, my reply is that I should feel exceedingly degraded in my own estimation were I selfish or base enough in any instance to sacrifice the one to the other. Infinite as my attachment is to Ireland, I trust that when reasoning upon their relative duties and common concerns my heart is sufficiently enlarged to discuss every question with the feelings which become a member of the Empire. I trust I never shall be an Irishman in contradistinction to the justice due to Britain, nor an Englishman as opposing and betraying the interests of this country. . . .

‘ . . . Let us not indulge ourselves in magnifying the errors of our system, lest we reform the constitution into an opposite and much more vicious extreme. God forbid that I should ever see the Monarch

¹ In copy.

of this land without influence or the Commons an immediate organ of the national will. I have observed the temper and the turn of mind of this country long enough to discover one truth, that if we wish to preserve internal harmony and external respectability, above all it is our object to remain connected with Great Britain. The Parliament of Ireland must be a deliberative assembly, free to act as they think fit during their internal existence, and not an assembly of delegates under the order of their *constituents*.

‘ Before we wage a commercial war with so important a customer [as Great Britain], it would be wise to secure a friend and a market elsewhere. I am afraid the Powers of Europe might possibly receive an Irish ambassador charged with a negotiation of this nature with less respect than our friends experienced when they bore the Crown of Regency to the Prince of Wales. Portugal, though her own interest impelled her to it, long refused Ireland the advantages of the Methuen Treaty till they were wrested for us by Great Britain. The language of reason, of enlarged and enlightened policy, has not yet penetrated thoroughly the cabinets of princes. Power and importance is necessary almost to procure a hearing. I am afraid we should cut a sorry figure and exhibit an appearance not very imposing, were we to appear before them simply clad in the garb of our insular dignity and abstracted freedom.

‘ . . . Should our commerce never extend beyond the channels in which it now flows, let us not depreciate its value because it is capable of having its limits enlarged. The fleet of England is in my opinion the charter by which we hold that commerce. Were its protection withdrawn we must either throw ourselves at the feet of some other maritime power, or remain exposed to the insults and robberies of every insignificant armed ship that sails the sea. It is physically impossible we should ever have a fleet of our own ; and it is absurd and romantick to imagine that we can ever exist for any length of time as a separate and independent state. Where is the successor to Great Britain if we detach ourselves from her ? Is it France ? That pile of ruins ! That melancholy example of misapplied philosophy, of political experiment and popular delirium ! Are we prepared to tear asunder the ties of interest, affection, blood, constitution, everything nearest to our hearts and dearest to our senses which unite us to Britain ? . . . I cannot express the horror with which I view indications of disaffection as they occur in either countries. It wounds me severely to perceive them in Ireland, but it would cut me to the heart were I to discover a trace of such feelings in a character from infancy the object of my respect and veneration. If any circumstance could check my exertions to improve the constitution of Ireland by strength-

ening the influence of the people, it would be that narrow national unworthy and pernicious spirit which prevails much too universally in this country for its credit, for its advantage, and even for the reformation it aims at.

‘ You express surprise that after having obtained my present situation by such labour, such strenuous exertions, and so great an expense, I should so little value the favour and popularity which are to continue me in it. My dear Doctor, believe me, I neither undervalue the situation in which I am placed nor am I insensible to the opinion and approbation of the public. They have each every feeling of respect from me they can claim. But is it a reason because I have expended much money and more constitution in pursuing an object interesting from the flattering support which attended me in it ? Is it a reason because I long toiled and endured considerable fatigue of body and mind to obtain the representation of the County of Down that I should crown these severe efforts by a sacrifice of my private judgment, opinion, and reason ? I do not perfectly understand what you mean by “ lightly risking popularity,” but I perfectly feel that it should not be retained an instant by a dereliction of that principle and conviction which every man will discover in his own mind if he takes the trouble to search for it. There is a feeling in my breast which disclaims and despises applause, let it proceed from whom it may, when persuasion cannot sanction the incense. If popularity (which I very much suspect) is of that fleeting nature that it expires upon the slightest contradiction, is it not an illusion too visionary to administer gratification to the most susceptible imagination ?

‘ As to my reflections on the test and its obligations, I am neither impatient to publish them nor have I any particular wish that they should be concealed. I am likely enough to declare them in conversation, for I find it extremely difficult at all times to suppress my opinions whatever they may happen to be. In respect to the obligations of the test no doubts can be entertained—they are precise. I am bound during my present tenure to support certain measures and to obey the instructions of my constituents, but I am not bound to argue in favour of opinions which I do not hold ; neither am I bound to suppress my individual sentiments in an assembly where it is the privilege of a Member of Parliament to deliver his ideas. Charged with their instructions I should do it with great scurrility, nevertheless I should feel bound to point out the conviction I could not surrender. As to the propriety of requiring tests from representatives and above all binding them down to the mandates of the electors or any portion of those who repute, the more I reflect on the practice the more my reason condemns it as repugnant to the principles of the constitution.

'... I hope you will ere long indulge me with an opportunity of seeing you here. We may then discuss the various topicks at our ease. I shall always court the discussion, for tho' I am sure to retire worsted in argument when I engage with you, the information and instruction I shall receive administered by the hand of a master and the lenity of a friend will prevent mortification and heal the wounds which I may meet with in the combat. I am particularly anxious to thank you in person for your agreeable letters. Your friendship and partiality are invaluable to

Yours affectionately devoted

R. STEWART.'

Although any hopes Robert Stewart may have entertained of immediate official preferment were destroyed by the correspondence on his parliamentary conduct which passed between Dublin Castle and Whitehall, his political delinquency did not stand in the way of his social advancement. At the end of the previous session he had become a member of the fashionable Daly's Club, whose coffee-room in College Green was the principal aristocratic *rendezvous* of the city.¹ He was now balloted for and elected to the exclusive Royal Irish Academy, which had been founded a few years before to encourage the liberal arts and sciences.² Towards the middle of the session he managed to escape for a brief spell to the north, where he wrote the above letter to Haliday, attended the Down Hunt, and was sworn a Justice of the Peace for the county.³ On his return to Dublin he found only a few charred remains of tables and benches, and the oak panelling which had excited the enthusiasm of John Wesley, in the chamber where he had been sitting scarce a fortnight before. During his absence almost the whole building, except the House of Lords, had been gutted by fire. The catastrophe was due to the mis-carriage of a novel experiment in central heating (one Nesbitt, 'a smoke doctor,' having been 'suffered to cut into the walls in order to lead flues into copper tubes, which he proposed to place on the angles of the dome'⁴), in the course of which some of the ancient woodwork was ignited by flying particles of red-hot soot.

¹ Elected April 12, 1791. 'Jan. 20, 1792, Admission Fees to Daly's Club, £17. 1. 3.' : Estate Office MSS. (Accounts Journal).

² Elected Feb. 25, 1792 : Royal Irish Academy, MS. Admission Register.

³ Appointed J.P. March 7 : Estate Office MSS. (Accounts Journal).

⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 28.

The House was busy in Committee when this alarming discovery was made by a clerk, who put his head through one of the small windows in the roof and informed honourable members that the dome would fall in upon them in a few minutes.¹ As can be readily guessed, the chairman lost no time in adjourning the House. Business, however, was enabled to proceed in another room which had not been touched by the flames, and during the ensuing months the Commons chamber was speedily rebuilt in similar style to the old, except that the new structure was circular instead of octagonal. There were rumours, of course, that the conflagration was the result of a Popish plot, but if a number of the inhabitants of County Down believed this, Robert Stewart for one was quite satisfied at the finding of the subsequent official enquiry that it was due to an accident.²

6

Parliament was prorogued in the middle of April, and Robert returned to Mount Stewart with the accumulated wisdom of two sessions conscientiously spent in attention to his political duties. He had persuaded his father to permit him to explore the Continent again during the summer, so that early in the following month he set off by the Portpatrick packet, which now sailed daily from Donaghadee. 'I have been induced to prefer this passage from its shortness, on account of my eldest sister who accompanies me and suffers very much at sea,' he told Charlemont the day before he started. 'I shall remain some weeks in England and propose passing the summer on the Continent, probably at Paris, provided the King of Hungary, whose disposition appears at least as hostile as his father's, suffers it to remain in tranquillity.'³

But it did not require the boy emperor Francis to disturb the tranquillity of Paris. Its own revolutionary momentum was sufficient. During the past twelve months events had sadly

¹ J. T. Gilbert, *Account of Parliament House*, 103.

² Lecky, iii. 77. Gilbert, *loc. cit.*

³ Stewart to Charlemont, April 30 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 190. Francis II had succeeded his father, the Emperor Leopold, in the hereditary dominions of the House of Hapsburg in March 1792. He was crowned emperor in July.

changed the face of the city as power gradually slipped away from the hands of the moderate Girondins. In June the Tuileries was invaded by a howling mob, into whose hands it fell shortly afterwards despite the gallant stand of the Swiss Guard. To the strains of the 'Marseillaise' the King and Queen of France were taken prisoners by their subjects, and all men knew that the French monarchy was doomed. These happenings caused Robert to delay his visit, and finally he went to Brussels instead. The subsequent activities of the popular party in the French capital fully justified this change of plan.

On hearing the news of the 'September' massacres Camden wrote to him: 'I think you have determined prudently to avoid Paris, where no man is safe from the violence of the mob, who have been taught they have an equal share in the government with the National Convention itself.' Meanwhile the Girondins had forced Louis XVI to declare war on the Emperor. Austria was soon joined by Prussia, and the British Ambassador in Paris having been recalled in August, it was now thought that England must shortly throw in her lot with the Allies. In this event Camden had little confidence in the efficiency of the revolutionary army. 'If Pitt can force the French to a battle, I am convinced the latter will run away,' he told Robert. 'They are a nation of boasters—they are cruel and of course cowards. They deserve every misery that war can plague them with.'¹ But his grandson, unlike most English contemporaries, had a much higher opinion of Dumouriez's soldiers, and early in September he confidently predicted the allied retreat which followed the 'cannonade of Valmy.'² The Battle of Jemappes, which laid open Belgium to the victorious French general in November, convinced Robert that he should follow the example of the *émigrés*, and so with the other '*gentilshommes anglais, résidents à Bruxelles*' he left for Ireland.

There was a considerable stir in Dublin. Robert found that during his absence the Catholic Committee had been renewing their agitation, in response to which the English ministry, actuated largely by the alarming turn events were taking on the Continent,

¹ Camden to Stewart, Sept. 30: Londonderry MSS.

² Haliday to Charlemont, Oct. 17: Charl. MSS. The Prussians were defeated at Valmy on Sept. 20, 1792.

had curtly instructed the local administration to prepare an extensive measure of relief. The movement in favour of parliamentary reform had also gained strength. Many other concessions were confidently expected when Parliament met by the popular party, whilst the 'loyalists' in the Castle shouted that they had been betrayed. Robert and his father were both present at the opening of the memorable session in January 1793. For the first time since the Parliament of James II the Catholics were referred to as 'His Majesty's Catholic subjects' in the Speech from the Throne, which was read by the Lord-Lieutenant, who at the same time expressed the hope that the situation of this body would engage the serious attention of both Houses.¹ In the Commons the customary address of thanks was seconded by a young Castle aide-de-camp, by name Captain Arthur Wesley, who, as he now addressed the assembly in College Green for the first time and briefly alluded to the principal features of the situation at home and abroad, can have little dreamed of the part he was destined to play with another young man there present in settling the international conflagration with which that year opened. Shortly afterwards Mr. Stewart (the other young man with whom Captain Wesley was as yet unacquainted) rose, and in what was described as 'a very handsome speech' congratulated the House on the prospect of the address being carried unanimously, declaring in addition that 'when the Catholic question came to be agitated liberality on his part should not be wanting.'² Although, as Robert expected, the address was carried without opposition, a stormy session was anticipated, for the anti-Catholic party in the House, led by the coarse and eccentric Advocate-General, Dr. Duigenan, and supported by all the 'Castle' influence, was determined to exert itself to the utmost to prevent any further concessions. 'Never did I witness such a day in Parliament,' wrote Charlemont of the opening. 'Such was my delight that I had scarcely power left me to laugh at the ludicrous oddity and comical amazement of many long faces in the assembly.'³ On the question of parliamentary reform nothing was said in the Lord-

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 1-3. Roman Catholics had previously been described in official documents as 'Papists.'

² *Belfast News-Letter*, Jan. 15, 1793. Stewart's speech is not reported in the *Parliamentary Register*.

³ Charlemont to Haliday, Jan. 15 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 209.

Lieutenant's speech, but a few days later Grattan moved for a Committee to enquire into the abuses of the constitution, and to this motion the House acceded without a division.¹

Robert's personal views on these important questions were clearly shown in a confidential letter which he wrote to his uncle, Lord Bayham,² about a fortnight after the opening of the session. Although he described it as 'scrawled in a coffee-room surrounded by drunken men so that you must expect it to partake of the surrounding confusion,' the sane reasoning which pervades it is well worthy of an older and riper intelligence. He commenced with the observation that the movement in favour of parliamentary reform had gained great strength, and that now, strange as it might appear, it was especially supported by those immediately interested in resisting it—the powerful borough proprietors.

'These old sages have discovered that reform is a wise and necessary measure, and they very prudently would rather effect it themselves than plunge the country in confusion or suffer the work to fall into other hands.'

He then proceeded to discuss Pitt's Irish policy and the only possible line calculated to preserve and foster local affection for England.

'Depend upon it, my dear Lord B., you must change your system with respect to Ireland; there is no alternative, now her independence is admitted, but to govern her by reason or *unite her to Great Britain by force*. A middle path will not do. A government of gross corruption—for it is not a government of influence—extinguishing every possibility of parliamentary authority will no longer be quietly endured. Give Ireland such a government as your own. When she abuses it depend upon it you will find a union a much more practicable measure; but as to continuing the present system, depend upon it, it is no longer possible. Those whose daily bread is the corruption complained of think so; is not that sufficient proof? It would require less force to unite the two Kingdoms than to govern as heretofore. . . .

'Let us consider what is to be done. Claims are coming from all ranks, Catholic and Protestant. The rational principle appears to be to concede what shall conciliate a sufficient number to guard against

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 51-5.

² John Jeffreys Pratt, eldest son of Lord Camden. Became Viscount Bayham (by courtesy) on his father being created an Earl in 1786. See below, p. 131.

tumult and at the same time does not go to destroy the framework of the constitution. There appears to me this strong distinction between the dissatisfaction of the two sects, that the Protestants may be conciliated at the same time that the constitution is improved; the Catholics never can by any concession which must not sooner or later tear down the Church or make the State their own. I believe that reform will effect itself either now or in a few years. If that be the case and the election franchise is given to that body, a few years will make three-fourths of the constituency of Ireland Catholics. Can a Protestant superstructure long continue supported on such a base? With a reformed representation and a Catholic constituency must not everything shortly follow? Can the Protestant Church remain the Establishment of a State of which they do not comprise an eighth part, which will be the case when the Catholics are co-equal in political rights? . . . Give them anything rather than the franchise, for it forces everything else. Property will feebly resist a principle so powerful. . . . If you give the franchise, reflect on the multitude of reformers you create; for so long as the representation stands as it now is the privilege is inefficient. This might be good policy if you could hope to damp the ardour for reform in the Protestants alarmed for their ascendancy, but that moment is passed. They have taken the step and they claim emancipation for the Catholics and representation for all, though I am persuaded that, were they gratified themselves, they would give you very little trouble on behalf of their Catholic allies. . . .

'The County of Down have drawn up strong resolutions in favour of reform. To give you some idea of the spirit which prevails: Hillsborough went there and made a long speech against reform, but when the question was put, although the meeting was prodigiously numerous and attended by many of his own party, he could carry with him but two votes—the one a revenue officer, the other a boy. He left them in a violent rage.'¹

The prophetic imagination of the author of this letter is remark-

¹ Stewart to Bayham, Jan. 26, 1793: Londonderry MSS; Alison, i. 12. Bayham in the course of his reply to this letter said: 'I inherit and upon consideration clearly am of my father's opinion that Ireland must be our province, if she will not be persuaded to a Union; and if she would, she ought and would enjoy complete and reciprocal benefits with this country. This is my opinion; but in the present state of politics there it would be dangerous either to maintain that opinion or to act in consequence of it, and the desirable thing *at present* is to quiet and to satisfy the minds of the moderate men such as you and your father; for if you give credit to those of a more violent disposition who will unite with you till you are alarmed and will then have gained strength and consequence enough to do without you. . . . The reform of Parliament must now be carried, and if it can be done, with moderation.' Bayham to Stewart, Feb. 4: *Cast. Corr.* i. 156.

able. The inevitability of the Protestant Church disestablishment in Ireland and of the ultimate separation of the country from England directly due to the extension of the franchise to the Catholics has been nowhere perhaps so clearly stated as here.

The Catholic Relief Bill, which was introduced into the House of Commons by the Chief Secretary and passed with little difficulty during that session, admitted Roman Catholics to all but a few specified civil rights. They might now serve on juries, take university degrees, hold commissions in the army and navy, become magistrates, be elected to corporations, and in addition they were no longer subject to any property disabilities. Their political rights, however, were limited to the exercise of the parliamentary franchise. Robert Stewart was strongly in favour of the civil concessions, but he opposed with considerable vigour the clause which extended the franchise to Catholics on the same terms as Protestants, recapitulating in his speech the arguments used with Bayham.¹ The franchise clause, though the most warmly debated in Committee, was ultimately carried at the urgent request of Pitt.² The Act received the royal assent in April, and in consequence of its coming into operation about thirty thousand new electors were immediately created.³

Landlords with Catholic tenants became more powerful than ever, while the united influence of land and borough proprietors had already taken care to prevent any salutary legislation in the nature of parliamentary reform. When the House of Commons went into Committee on the latter issue as agreed, Grattan rose and in one of his finest orations moved a number of resolutions, of which the principal was 'that the state of the representation of the people in Parliament requires amendment.'⁴ Robert Stewart, who supported these resolutions in what is said to have been 'a very able speech,' made no attempt to conceal his dislike of the borough monopolists.

'The present borough system prevents the people from having any tie or influence over their representatives; it also prevents the Crown from having a power of appeal to the people and thus subjugates it to the power of an aristocratic combination.'⁵

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, March 5, 1793.

² *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 322-60 (Feb. 27).

³ Lecky, iii. 186. ⁴ *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 163.

⁵ *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 165 (Feb. 12).

He further hastened to point out that a reform of this kind was much less necessary in England than in Ireland, for the simple reason that the constitution of Ireland was much worse than that of the sister Kingdom. The occupants of the government benches were less impressed by this logic than by its author's manner of speaking, and a hostile amendment to Grattan's resolutions was easily carried.¹

A week later the question was reopened by a private member, and Robert again spoke on the side of the reformers, boldly confessing that in his opinion 'the conduct of Administration was wholly unintelligible,' since it had first granted a committee of enquiry and then refused to enquire.

'The difficulties of Administration hitherto have arisen rather from supporting the present ruinous system than from any opposition that has been made to the necessary measures of government. It is the vices of the existing system that have driven the public mind into a state of agitation; if the people are suffered to pore longer over those vices it is impossible in times like these to foresee what follies they may adopt.'²

With these prophetic words ringing in their ears the majority of the House proceeded to reject the motion, and the Committee did nothing. In both debates on parliamentary reform Robert Stewart acted as a teller for the minority. His speeches on each occasion made quite a sensation in College Green, and thereafter, as Barrington remarked, their author 'was considered as a very clever young man.'³

Not many days after the opening of the session a spectacular episode occurred in the House of Commons which drew all eyes towards its central figure. It was the occasion of a motion of an address of thanks to the Lord-Lieutenant for his proclamation suppressing the National Guard, a revolutionary corps which had recently been enrolled in Dublin as a compliment to the French. An animated discussion took place, in the course of which Robert Stewart, according to Dr. Drennan, 'lashed himself into a passion,' denouncing in no unmeasured terms the Convention which had executed its King.⁴ (This led the doctor's sister, on

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 188.

² *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 238-9 (Feb. 19).

³ Barrington, *Personal Reminiscences*, 170.

⁴ Drennan to McTier, Feb. 1793 : *Drennan Letters*, 386A.

being informed of such behaviour, to make the nice remark that 'Robert Stewart will be the shadow of Burke against France.'¹ Suddenly a small, dark young man of extremely handsome features, who represented Kildare County, jumped up from his seat and exclaimed: 'I give my most hearty disapprobation of that address, for I do think that the Lord-Lieutenant and the majority of this House are the worst subjects the King has.'² The author of this extraordinary censure (he was not drunk), which has been so faithfully recorded by every nationalist historian, was called Lord Edward Fitzgerald.³

A younger brother of the Duke of Leinster, Lord Edward was at this time just thirty years of age. He had, in fact, just arrived from Paris with his fair young wife Pamela (it was whispered that she was the daughter of Philippe 'Egalité,' Duke of Orleans, by Madame de Genlis). An adventurous career and a frank manner soon makes a man popular. Lord Edward had both. His life had been saved by a negro during an engagement in which he was severely wounded at the close of the American War of Independence, and whilst subsequently exploring the *hinterland* he had the distinction of being elected the chief of a tribe of Red Indians. On his return to Europe he had shown his liking for republicanism by listening to the debates in the French Convention and attending a Parisian banquet with Tom Paine, where more from a sense of republican than alcoholic intoxication he enthusiastically toasted 'the speedy abolition of all hereditary titles and feudal distinctions.' For this latter exploit he was dismissed the army. He thereupon set out for Ireland, and found that owing to his brother's influence he had been elected a Member of Parliament during his absence. He was scarcely in Dublin a week when the House of Commons was startled by his impetuous outburst. A scene of confusion followed, which on account of the clearing of the galleries has not been reported. He was taken into custody by the Sergeant-at-Arms and ordered to apologise at the Bar of the House, but the explanation which he gave was unanimously voted 'unsatisfactory and insufficient.' Finally on

¹ McTier to Drennan, Feb. 8: Drennan Letters, 389 (unpublished).

² *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 82.

³ See *Lives* by Thomas Moore and I. A. Taylor; also *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xix. 110.

the next day he submitted some kind of apology which must have been far from perfect, since a large majority voted against its acceptance ; and he was allowed to resume his seat.

This unpleasant interlude had the effect of administering a rude shock to the self-complacency of the House of Commons, for it soon became plain that Lord Edward Fitzgerald represented sentiments that were beginning to spread inside as well as outside Parliament. Unfortunately for Lord Edward, he possessed a hot-headed temperament which quite unsuited him for the part of a successful revolutionary politician, though his disposition was eminently lovable. ' He was born with the most romantic benevolent heart,' declared his aunt, Lady Sarah Napier, who understood his peculiar and erratic genius perhaps better than any of his relatives, but ' his imagination carried him beyond the bounds of *practical* philanthropy, and the times led too plainly to the strong desire of freeing his fellow creatures from the *real* and manifest cruelties and oppressions of the Government of Ireland, which guided by a few, some upstarts, others interested, others fools, etc., etc., see no salvation for themselves but by bloodshed and civil war. Edward saw it coming fast, and he wished them free, but what steps he took to *promote* it depended on his *judgment*.' ¹ However that judgment may have been distorted in relation to actual circumstances, it cannot be denied that the courageous and outspoken *rôle* which he played in them, ending as it did so tragically a few years later in a dirty dungeon, has placed him above by far the majority of his fellow conspirators and has enshrined him for ever in the hearts of the native Irish. ²

7

The throwing open of the river Scheldt to universal navigation by the French after their success at Jemappes in violation of international treaty obligations had made a general European war inevitable. Great Britain and Holland joined the Allies in February. The danger of an enemy invasion of Ireland determined the government to introduce a series of stringent military measures. At Pitt's suggestion the Lord-Lieutenant disbanded

¹ Lady Sarah Napier to Lady Susan O'Brien, July 20, 1798 : *Ilchester, Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, ii. 132.

² See below, pp. 246-248.

the Volunteers,¹ and in their place proceeded to conscript a militia on the same basis as that which already existed in England and Scotland. The prudence of this move was questioned in many quarters since there were always abundant Volunteer recruits in Ireland which could have done invaluable service if organised on proper lines. Unfortunately many of the old Volunteer regiments had become lamentably out of hand, and those in the neighbourhood of Belfast did considerably more harm than good. However, the system of compulsory enlistment in the new militia regiments was so fiercely resisted throughout the country that it had to be qualified in practice so as to admit of substituted service and pecuniary commutation.

The Militia Act directed the conscription of sixteen thousand men by ballot for an initial period of four years. It was introduced into Parliament early in March, and passed through both Houses without material opposition. Though he was acutely conscious of its unpopularity, Robert Stewart gave it his support on the ground that present circumstances made it essential to the salvation of the country. He explained the situation in a letter to his grandfather :

'The measure being decided on, I shall strive to reconcile my friends to it, convinced it will prove a most valuable advantage to Ireland when effectually and respectably established. Whatever other obligations we may owe to our present Government, I shall always acknowledge as an important advantage their having completely suppressed our Volunteers. Those armed associations when headed by men of property, although highly unconstitutional, were harmless, but of late the danger from them has been imminent. They were in the hands of low men who arrayed them avowedly for the purpose of intimidating Government into a reform. They were providing themselves with ammunition and might have been led into any excess by their Jacobin leaders. . . . My opinion has invariably been, that the country could never have any security against sedition as long as volunteering was tolerated nor its internal peace be firmly established till a militia took place.'²

¹ By Proclamation dated March 11, 1793—it was especially directed against the Belfast Volunteers. Cp. Haliday's remarks : ' Good God ! that the town of Belfast—distinguished by its attachment to the constitution from and before the Revolution, and to the House of Hanover . . .—should be thus insulted and dragooned on very frivolous pretexts and the laws of the land wounded through our sides ! ' : Haliday to Charlemont, March 13 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 212.

² Stewart to Camden, April 17 : Londonderry MSS. ; Alison, i. 20.

Much of the bloodshed and misery which followed the passing of the Militia Act might indeed have been prevented if, as Robert Stewart said, the new force had been 'respectably established,' but the fact that all the officers were Protestants while the privates were principally Catholics gave rise to the rumour that the Irish Government intended by this means to punish the Catholics for their recent agitation. Certainly the first signs of serious internal discord date from the passing of this Act. The fines levied in the districts where the Act was not obeyed, the billeting of soldiers in private houses, the prevailing tendency among militiamen to use little discrimination when dispersing unlawful assemblies, and the infliction of severe military punishments upon civilian rioters, added fuel to the flames of popular discontent and led to a tremendous spread of lawlessness. The support which the Militia Act received from Grattan and his followers in the House of Commons completely alienated popular sympathy with the Opposition. 'What is the navigation of the Scheldt to us?' asked the Belfast patriots, whilst the United Irish leader, Wolfe Tone, confessed that he had 'long entertained a more sincere contempt for what is called the Opposition than for the common prostitutes of the Treasury Bench who want at least the vein of hypocrisy.'¹ Meanwhile the Volunteers made a final protest against demobilisation. In the previous November they had refused to parade round King William III's statue in College Green on the occasion of that monarch's birthday—they now substituted 'The Lad with the White Cockade' for 'God Save the King' as a regimental march.² Discontent was rapidly growing into disloyalty.

The long and important parliamentary session of 1793 lasted till August. It was productive at least of a number of useful and much-needed legislative reforms. The pension list was reduced, the King's hereditary revenue was abolished and a fixed Civil List was granted in lieu, a Place Act was passed, and the East Indian trade question was settled. The Place Act compelled

¹ Cited Lecky, iii. 194-5.

² McTier to Drennan, Feb. 8: *Drennan Letters*, 389. The last Volunteer Convention was held at Dungannon in February 1793. At a previous meeting of the Northern Whig Club it was moved and carried that Robert Stewart should 'attend the meeting at Dungannon if it did not interfere with his duty in Parliament.' He did not attend. *Drennan Letters*, loc. cit.

members of the House of Commons who accepted office under the Crown to vacate their seats and seek re-election if they wished to retain their membership. But in making no distinction between real and nominal offices, the effect of this measure was ultimately very different from that intended by its framers. By virtue of the existence of such offices as the Escheatorship of Munster (equivalent to the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds in England) it was possible for the government a few years later to change the composition of the House at will without a dissolution. It is very doubtful, however, whether Robert Stewart, who supported the measure as he was pledged to do, foresaw the precise manner of its future operation.¹ As for Ireland's right to trade with the East, this was at last legally acknowledged in a Government Act which provided that a ship of eight hundred tons should sail annually from Cork to India carrying Irish goods, and that it bring back Indian merchandise direct to the Irish port. In supporting the bill Robert Stewart made a useful contribution to the debate on its second reading along his old lines of argument, and he had the satisfaction of witnessing the solution of a question which had been periodically raised since his entry into Parliament. At the same time Grattan, who threw all his eloquence into the support of the measure, wished to go further and to place Anglo-Irish commercial relations on a reciprocal basis, for there were still several instances in which Irish were not admitted into England on the same or as favourable terms as were English goods into Ireland. This suggested reciprocity had been Pitt's wish in 1785, but its realisation in the shape of Orde's 'propositions' had been thwarted by the English legislature. However, it was now considered inexpedient to combine such a large issue with that of East Indian trade, and commercial reciprocity had to wait till the Union.²

It was during this memorable session that Robert Stewart made the acquaintance of the future Duke of Wellington. One night as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Parnell, was leaving the House after its adjournment to attend a dinner given by Jonah Barrington, he noticed the two young members, who had

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, Mar. 12, 1793. For criticism see Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, ch. xxii; and Lecky, iii. 185.

² *Parl. Reg.* xiv. 514; Lecky, iii. 186.

remained late. He guessed that they had not dined ; and as soon as they were introduced he bade them accompany him to Barrington's house, where they would be assured of a warm welcome. It happened that the Speaker was also a guest, and as etiquette did not permit the meal to commence before his arrival, Parnell and his two *protégés* were in good time for the dinner. Besides those already mentioned, the company included Major Hobart (the Chief Secretary), Isaac Corry, Sir John Blaquiere, and Lords Llandaff, Dillon, Yelverton and Limerick. Lord Clonmell sent his two ' grand cooks ' for the occasion, so that it was no wonder, as the host afterwards observed, that ' the evening passed amidst that glow of well-bred, witty, and cordial vinous conviviality, which was, I believe, peculiar to high society in Ireland.' Barrington, who had now a busy practice at the Four Courts as well as a reputation for more than passable anecdotes in the House, now became on fairly intimate terms with both Captain Wesley and Mr. Robert Stewart, although, as he wrote when describing the incident many years later with characteristic bitterness, ' at the period to which I allude, I feel confident that nobody could have predicted that one of those young gentlemen would become the most celebrated English general of his time, and the other one of the most mischievous statesmen and unfortunate ministers that has ever appeared in modern Europe.'¹

¹ Barrington, *Personal Reminiscences*, 170-1.

CHAPTER IV

ACTIVE SERVICE : INTERLUDE IN ENGLAND

I

ROBERT STEWART had declared from his seat in the House of Commons that under conviction of the necessity of the Militia Act, no effort should be wanting on his part to carry it effectually into execution.¹ He accordingly accepted a commission in a regiment which was being raised in the north by 'the rich man of Merrion Street,' the Right Honourable Thomas Conolly, M.P., wealthiest Irish landowner and genial champion of the country gentry. In April he was 'gazetted' Lieutenant-Colonel of the Londonderry Militia.² In the same month Hillsborough so far forgot his political differences as to offer him a commission in the regiment which he himself was raising in Down, throwing in as an added inducement a Deputy Governorship of the County. Robert politely refused both offers, suggesting with regard to the latter that 'some gentleman more at liberty might be preferred.'³ The aged Camden was secretly pleased at his grandson's 'patriotic spirit,' though he could not forbear to reproach him for entering into 'a rash and what my cold blood would call an inconsiderate engagement which might have been avoided without any imputation of deserting the public.'⁴ Haliday was not so jubilant. 'I am sorry for our young friend's success,' he confided in Charlemont. 'He has twice made the Grand Tour to some impairment of his purse and constitution. His present elevation does not promise to recruit either.'⁵ However, the worthy doctor supposed that 'a young man of spirit may be allowed to think, when

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xiii. 387.

² The original commission (dated April 26, 1793) is preserved in the Londonderry Archives.

³ Stewart to Hillsborough, April 13 : Downshire MSS.

⁴ Camden to Stewart, Sept. 9 : Londonderry MSS.

⁵ Haliday to Charlemont, Nov. 29 : Charl. MSS.

civil and military ardour come into competition, that *militia est potior*.¹

He was in camp long before the end of the parliamentary session, and in Conolly's absence he superintended the enrolment and training of recruits in the County Derry. After a period of preliminary instruction in Newtown Limavady the men moved west to Ballyshannon, which was to be their winter quarters; they were accompanied by their Lieutenant-Colonel. 'I have great compassion, my dear Robert, for your situation and want of all possible liberal amusement,' wrote Camden, now fast decaying in Brighton, on being informed of his locality. 'Yet you will have some reason hereafter to reflect with pleasure upon this miserable banishment as it gave you an opportunity of forming the last militia regiment, for that general opinion is gone abroad already.'² The monotony of route marches and musketry practice was to a certain extent relieved by ample leisure hours, in which he read the newspapers and followed the progress of the war with the greatest interest. His remarks upon the relative strength of the antagonists show how his thoughts were running. On hearing of the reverses suffered by the Allies in September he wrote to his grandfather:

'BALLYSHANNON, *September 25, 1793.*

'... The only thing, my dear lord, which really dispirits me is the unprecedented struggle of order against anarchy and the unfortunate facility with which France recruits her army as fast as the sword exterminates it. A few days transforms their ragamuffins into troops which are not contemptible even when opposed to the best soldiers in Europe. They make up in madness and numbers what they want in discipline. This is by no means the case with the Allies. The havoc of war and disease is not so easily replaced. ...

'... The part of the campaign which remains is in my mind the most formidable. It is the season when France can feed and consequently set in motion the greatest number of forces; besides, their strength becomes the accumulated effect and discipline of many months which crumbles away in the winter season. God forbid that it should close with another Jemappes; it might give us a warmer

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, July 24: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 218.

² Camden to Stewart, Dec.: Londonderry MSS. The following entry appears in Londonderry's Accounts' Journal: 'Sept. 3, 1794. Robert Stewart my son. ... For so much expended by him on the Londonderry Militia recruits £54. 1. 3.' : Estate Office MSS. (Accounts' Journal, 1791-1803).

winter in this country than I ever hope to see. A defeat in a pitched battle is fatal to the Allies. Their strength in the field once overthrown their country is overcome ; not so with their opponents ; a defeat is soon repaired and its effects counteracted by the endless fortifications which protect their frontiers. In short, my dear lord, I do not like a retreat to which we have been driven because I know it produces a mechanical effect upon our enemy and gives them a most formidable confidence in themselves. The present moment seems so critical that I cannot be at rest. The tranquillity of Europe is at stake, and we contend with an opponent whose strength we have no means of measuring. *It is the first time that all the population and all the wealth of a great kingdom has been concentrated in the field : what may be the result is beyond my perception. . . .*¹

This is surely an example of fine judgment uttered at a time when the leading politicians, including Pitt himself, were certain that the war would not last beyond Christmas and were confidently expecting the speedy disintegration of the French Republic.

It was during this first bout of soldiering in the west of Ireland that Robert underwent a strange experience, which was to make a lasting impression on his mind. Returning late one evening with his men to barracks after a long field day, he complained that he was tired and in low spirits. At supper it is possible that he took more than his usual supply of wine in a vain attempt to banish the *ennui* which was weighing him down. A large fire of wood and turf blazed up an old gaping chimney in the room in which he slept, and after contemplating it in solitude for some time he commenced to feel drowsy and retired to bed. In the middle of the night he awoke, and for a while lay watching from his pillow the gradual darkening of the embers on the hearth. Suddenly the embers burned up brightly, and then (so Robert afterwards declared) the figure of a naked child stepped out from among them upon the floor. The apparition advanced slowly towards his bed, increasing in size at every step, until on coming within a few paces of him 'it had assumed the appearance of a ghastly giant with a bleeding wound on the brow and eyes glaring with rage and despair.'² Robert immediately jumped out of bed and 'confronted the figure in an attitude of defiance.' It thereupon retreated before his astonished gaze, diminishing in the same

¹ Stewart to Camden, Sept. 25 : Londonderry MSS. ; Alison, i. 21-3.

² J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, iv. 52 (ed. 1900).

manner as it had previously increased. It gradually assumed its original childlike form, and disappeared into the fire. Robert immediately went back to bed, and suffered no further disturbance that night. Next day his companions, to whom he related 'the vision of the radiant boy' (as he called it), dismissed the story as a bad dream, but not so Robert. For many years he continued to relate it in conversation, and at one of his wife's supper parties in Paris in 1815 he repeated it with a gravity which amazed his audience. Amongst those present on the latter occasion was Sir Walter Scott, who remembered it with a sigh as he sat in his garden at Abbotsford on a fateful summer morning seven years later.¹ Scott subsequently confessed to the Irish poet Tom Moore 'that the only two men who had ever told him that they had actually seen a ghost afterwards put an end to themselves—one was Lord Castlereagh.'² There is a legend that 'the radiant boy' was a wraith attached to the Stewart family, coming only at rare intervals 'to presage honours and prosperity before whom it appeared';³ but Robert is not reported as having given any such account of it, and there is no record of its having appeared before any of his blood relations or ancestors. The so-called vision was probably no more than the production of a feverish dream rendered acute by severe physical exhaustion and nervous anxiety, though it affords, in the words of Scott's biographer, 'a striking indication of the courageous temper which proved true to itself even amidst the terrors of fancy.'⁴

¹ Lockhart, *op. cit.* iv. 53. Scott, when writing to his son shortly after Castlereagh's death, remarks: 'This explains a story he once told me of having seen a ghost and which I thought was a very extraordinary narrative from the lips of a man of so much steadiness and nerve. But no doubt he had been subject to aberrations of mind which often create such phantoms.' Lockhart, *op. cit.* iv. 51.

² Thomas Moore, *Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence*, iv. 337-8 (ed. Russell).

³ T. Moore, *loc. cit.*

⁴ Lockhart, *op. cit.* iv. 53. See also an article by the late F. J. Bigger in the *Belfast News-Letter*, November 19, 1923. The room in which the vision is said to have appeared can still be seen by visitors to the large old house by the bridge at Ballyshannon. This local tradition inspired William Allingham to write *The Goblin Child of Belashanny* (see W. Allingham, *Irish Songs and Poems*, at p. 125). Allingham, who was brought up in the neighbourhood, heard the story in his childhood, with the circumstances of the marching in of the regiment at nightfall, etc. (*op. cit.* 162).

Robert obtained leave to return home for Christmas, and Haliday was glad to see him for an hour in Belfast as he passed through 'on his way from his myrmidons at Ballyshannon to Mount Stewart.'¹ Shortly after the New Year he left for the opening of Parliament in Dublin. During the usual debate on the Address, Grattan astonished some of his followers with the stated opinion that Ireland should extend to Great Britain her wholehearted and unequivocal support in the prosecution of the war. Now, although Grattan's authority and influence remained undisputed in the Opposition lobbies, there were a number of independent members who ventured to differ from his outlook. Early in February Sir Lawrence Parsons raised an indirect protest by moving for papers relating to all Great Britain's treaty obligations to be laid before the Irish Parliament. Robert Stewart was among the very few members who agreed with Parsons that the country should not blindly support the war; proper investigations as to its causes and conduct should first be made, and it was the duty of Parliament to make them. Largely owing to Grattan's eloquent opposition the motion was lost by a huge majority.² Robert explained his attitude in a letter to Bayham:

'Never did administration stand on ground so strong, and never in my mind was it so much their policy to provoke discussion and to brave all opposition by giving all documents and challenging all investigation. But that openness of conduct which Mr. Pitt invariably adopts in the British Parliament is not as yet a part of the Irish system. The Ministers of this country think everything is to be done in Parliament by a majority and out of it by a good dinner. They are so much in the habit of being wrong that they never can persuade themselves that they are in the right. They are so much used to fight upon bad, that they do not know the value of good grounds. They resort to the same miserable cavil and are as much afraid of discussion as if it must prove inevitable condemnation. . . .'

'... The investigation of the subject in the English Parliament, I am persuaded, has answered the best purposes in carrying forward the

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, Dec. 25: Charl. MSS.

² The voting was, For 9—Against 128: *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 11, 1794. The minority consisted of Parsons, Tighe, Duquerry, Curran, Brooke, Maxwell, Stewart, Egan and Brown. The debate and division took place on Feb. 5, but are only briefly mentioned in the *Parliamentary Register* (xiv. 16).

affections of the people. Here the question is little understood. Many imagine we are at war because Great Britain is at war—that is, as they conceive because Mr. Pitt chose it; they imagine that England was the first aggressor—that she is united with all the despots of Europe to enslave France. They have not had the dangers of Jacobin and revolutionary politics explained to them as the people of England have. They believe France anxiously desires peace and is disposed to observe it when made. Such is the delusion into which they have been led by the Jacobin writers.’¹

It is significant that, in spite of the caustic remark upon the Irish administration which this letter contains, the Prime Minister, to whom Bayham showed it, should have written to the author acknowledging its ‘obliging’ tone.² Further signs were now being clearly indicated of the more enlightened policy towards Ireland which had commenced with the Catholic concessions.

This was the first parliamentary debate on foreign policy in which Robert Stewart took part. It was the sole occasion, too, on which he is reported as having spoken during the short session of 1794, for soon afterwards the news that his grandfather Camden was rapidly sinking led to his abrupt departure for London. Charlemont, who saw him before he left, still sang his praises to Haliday, but for the first time he sounded a discordant note in his eulogy. ‘Robert Stewart is really an able and most amiable young man,’ he declared, ‘and would, I think, have been perfect if his politics had not been a little Camdenised; not but that I respect Lord Camden in the highest degree, but perhaps the doctrine and example of an aged statesman unnerved and dispirited by years and painful experience may be apt too much to abate and damp the fire of a youthful disciple.’³ The aged statesman’s plight was at that moment truly pitiable. He had been overcome by a ‘violent diarrhœa,’ of which Brighton waters could not cure him, so that, as Robert sorrowfully observed, he sat ‘helpless in his chair dosing from morning till night and never attempting to utter a syllable.’⁴ In this miserable condition he lingered on till the middle of April. Not many months before death he sent his grandson a snuff-box containing a small

¹ Stewart to Bayham, Sept. 17: Londonderry MSS.; Alison, i. 25.

² W. Pitt to Stewart, Sept. 25: Londonderry MSS.

³ Charlemont to Haliday, Jan. 1, 1794: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 225.

⁴ Haliday to Charlemont, April 9: *Charl. MSS.*

lock of his white hair—‘ a poor memento ’ he described the gift, ‘ to remind you after I am gone of the constant love I ever bore you, since I can’t help claiming you (if my vanity can be excused in taking to myself one of much nobler descent) for one of my own children.’¹

3

During his visit to London Robert made the acquaintance of a young lady of noble birth, handsome appearance, and no mean fortune. At first sight he fell in love with her, and he felt that he would remain so till the end of his life, as indeed proved the case. Her name was Lady Amelia (Emily) Hobart, and she was a sister of Lord Buckinghamshire. They probably met either in Camden’s house or in that of his son Lord Bayham, though it is possible that they were introduced first by Thomas Conolly, who was Lady Emily’s uncle. The dying minister at least had the satisfaction of seeing the young couple betrothed before he breathed his last. Robert was deeply affected by the poignancy of the situation. ‘ In the midst of all the joy I experience,’ he wrote to his fiancée shortly before the end, ‘ you will understand what I feel in taking leave perhaps for the last time of the friend who has long cherished me as a child, under whose care I have grown up, and in whose society I have lived. It is indeed a loss from which nothing but his release from suffering could reconcile me to.’²

Lady Emily Hobart was at this time twenty-two years old, and she appeared to the world, in Haliday’s words, ‘ a fine, comely, good-humoured, playful (not to say romping) piece of flesh as any Illyrian.’³ Her father, the late Earl of Buckinghamshire, was that popular aristocrat described by Horace Walpole as ‘ fat, fair, and seen through in a moment,’ and generally known as ‘ the Clear-cake.’ He had been sent over to the Viceregal Lodge in the seventies, but had speedily fallen a prey to Castle intrigues, and his nervous as well as his administrative system broke down. He spoke of himself as ‘ a man whose mind has been ulcerated by a variety of embarrassments.’ After four weary years he was

¹ Camden to Stewart, Sept. 9, 1793 : Londonderry MSS.

² Stewart to Lady E. Hobart, undated (but clearly April 1794) : Londonderry, *Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh*, 8.

³ Haliday to Charlemont, Aug. 27, 1794 : Charl. MSS.

recalled, and ultimately died from the effects of 'dipping a gouty foot in cold water.'¹ He had married twice, and Emily, being the only child by his second wife, was left the principal share of his fortune. His widow (*née* Conolly) was a sister of Robert's commanding officer in the Derry Militia.² Their only daughter had as a child accompanied the Viceregal suite to Dublin in 1777, and was apparently the Lord-Lieutenant's greatest comfort during his unhappy administration. 'My little Emily, who leans upon my shoulder as I write, sends her love to you,' he wrote to a friend. 'Let the impression of the innocence and good humour which animate her countenance dwell upon your mind.'³ She grew up gay and attractive in person; she was gifted with a most sympathetic nature and was invariably cheerful. Robert's courtship was swift. 'You have left me, as far as I am myself concern'd, nothing to wish for,' he told her in one of the few notes of this period which have been preserved: 'you have given repose to all my disquietudes and open'd prospects of happiness which give me a new interest in life.'⁴ As a lasting mark of his affection he sent her a beautiful miniature of himself; it was painted by Cosway, and was set in a golden locket which also contained some strands of his hair.⁵

Lord and Lady Londonderry came over from Mount Stewart to set the seal of parental approbation on the match and to see the couple happily wed. Robert's stepmother, to his satisfaction,

¹ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xxvii. 32. An interesting selection from his correspondence as Lord-Lieutenant is preserved in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 34, 523).

² Catherine Conolly. She was descended from Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and inherited Irish estates and heirlooms which had belonged to him. After Buckinghamshire's death she lived on his Norfolk estates at Blickling Hall, where she was frequently visited by Robert Stewart and her daughter. On her death in 1817 these estates passed to a daughter by a former husband (Henrietta), who married William Kerr, Earl of Ancrum and later sixth Marquess of Lothian. Lady Emily also left her property to Lady Lothian.

³ Buckinghamshire to Sir C. Thompson, Dec. 6, 1777: Buckinghamshire MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 523).

⁴ Stewart to Lady E. Hobart, April 1794: Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 8.

⁵ This miniature and locket are preserved at Mount Stewart. 'I have sent some of my hair to be put in your locket, and beg you will wear it, and be assured that it is not given with a less ardent feeling than that which you now wear as the first present I ever made you.' Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 1796: Londonderry MSS.



EMILY, VISCOUNTESS CASTLEREAGH

1772-1829

From the portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence in the collection of The Most Honourable The Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.

pronounced Lady Emily 'truly amiable—her figure striking,'¹ a description borne out in the famous portrait of her which was painted about this time by Sir Thomas Lawrence.² They were married at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, within a fortnight of the bridegroom's twenty-sixth birthday.³ A fine house had been purchased for their convenience in the same neighbourhood, so as to be near the Camdens and Lady Emily's friends the Mount EdgECumbes, and they moved into No. 3 Cleveland Square on their wedding day.⁴ They were both profoundly happy; but Haliday hoped that 'politics may not sow dissension between the young couple,' for at breakfast on the following morning Emily was reported to have exclaimed with a pretty wit:

'... These wild people of France
From Chivalry widely depart,
When they carry some fair maiden's head on a lance,
Yet I love *Robert's spear* in my heart.'

Edmund Burke, to whom this verse was repeated, is said to have been 'enraged' at the last line, for he was by no means enamoured

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, May 24: Charl. MSS.

² Though Lawrence was only twenty-four when he painted this picture, it ranks among his best works. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1794. 'Pasquin,' who saw it there, criticised it so severely in the press that Lady Emily's family refused to take it, and the artist in consequence never painted anything for them afterwards: D. E. Williams, *Life of Sir T. Lawrence*, i. 151. It is now in Londonderry House.

³ June 9, 1794: St. George's Parish Register of Marriages (*Harleian Society's Publications*, xiv. 114). The witnesses were Sir Richard Heron, Lord Valletort, H. Harbord, Esq., Lord Londonderry, Lady Buckinghamshire, Hon. F. W. Hervey, C. H. Harbord, Esq., Lady Valletort, and G. P. Holford, Esq.

⁴ This house is still in existence. It stands at the west end of Cleveland Row, opposite Bridgewater House (on the site of which was then Cleveland Court) and overlooking St. James's and the Green Parks. It was not till 1805 that Castlereagh took up the more celebrated residence, which he retained till his death, at No. 15 (later 16 and now 18) St. James's Square. Outside the latter house there is an inscription which commemorates his tenancy, being in fact the only one thus noted. His other town and suburban residences were, with the approximate dates of occupation, as follows: Temple Grove, East Sheen, Surrey, 1802-6; 12 Upper Brook Street, Westminster, 1804-5; Belmont (later Stanmore Park), Stanmore, Middlesex, 1807-10; Cray Farm (now Woollett Hall), North Cray, Kent, 1810-22. See Boyle's *Court Guide*, 1796-1822. *The Times*, Aug. 16, 1822. W. Thornbury and E. Walford, *Old and New London*, iv. 177, 190. E. Walford, *Greater London*, i. 299, ii. 61. H. B. Wheatley, *London Past and Present*, i. 423, ii. 301, etc.

of Robespierre. But the bridegroom was not displeased, considering that the words in question were amply justified by 'what went before.'¹

Notwithstanding the important part which she played in her husband's life, comparatively little is known about Emily. Though inclined to gossip she wrote no memoirs (at least none that have survived) and apparently very few letters. Her chief fault seems to have been petulance, and on occasion she was known to lack discretion.² But if she was somewhat capricious in manner and careless in speech, she atoned for these frequent feminine failings by the extraordinary encouragement and devotion which she gave Robert throughout his career. Lacking the additional bond which the possession of children confers, their union was marked by an ardent and beautiful mutual love, unusual in an age which was accustomed to seek so many diversions from marital duties. While he worked at home she would remain beside his desk, and they would only be separated when the most pressing obligations demanded it. She would follow him faithfully through town and country, and on his official journeys would spend 'nights of cold, hunger, and weariness in miserable lodgings without complaining or seeming to feel any inconvenience.'³ This persevering attachment was sometimes carried to such lengths as to cause their friends considerable amusement, and to a certain extent she followed her own desires in this matter rather than those of her master. Although many of his interests were necessarily beyond the limits of her intelligence, she was by no means divorced from his political activities. But, unlike a number of her contemporaries, she never made use of her position as a potential influence in political channels. She was no more than an excellent hostess, and in this capacity was deservedly popular. In short, she was, as a social acquaintance in Dublin later described her, 'one of those characters made to succeed in the world.'⁴

On his side Robert could not bear to leave her for a single

¹ Halliday to Charlemont, June 19: Charl. MSS.

² See particularly Bishop Percy to his wife, June 11, 1798: Percy MSS. (B.M. Add. 32,335); A. C. C. Gaussen, *Percy*, 259. The incident described is mentioned by Lecky, iv. 432, note.

³ Comtesse de Boigne, *Memoirs*, ii. 165 (English ed. 1907).

⁴ Lady S. Napier to Lady S. O'Brien, Jan. 10, 1800: Ilchester, *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, ii. 149.

night, and during the rare intervals when his work obliged him to be absent he wrote often twice and sometimes thrice daily. 'O *you of little* faith!' he once reproached her in a letter. 'So you suspected me of failing in giving you regular assurances of my affection, and you never recollected that when a traveller is on the road every day's journey makes two days' difference in the letter which is to return—but I forgive you since I am not within reach, and almost love you better for being unreasonable enough to expect the natural order of things to be changed for your gratification.'¹ Since they were thus so seldom separated, his letters are by no means so numerous as might otherwise be supposed, though indeed 'my dearest Emily' seems to have religiously preserved every scrap her Robert wrote to her. What do exist, however, are of the greatest value, for not only do they betray the passionate affection which the man never ceased to entertain towards his wife, but they reveal his extraordinary character and personality as no other letters have done. Without violating the sanctity of family correspondence, an attempt has been made in the following pages to reproduce sufficient portions of them as will prove an abundance of kindness and sympathy in the author, together with a genuine love of Ireland lying behind that unfortunate barrier of reserve which has been so cruelly misunderstood alike by contemporaries and posterity.²

4

As soon as he had heard of Robert's engagement, Haliday wrote conveying the news to Charlemont. 'The only drawback,' he added, 'is that this match, in all other respects seemingly so desirable, may in its consequences detach our amiable friend from this country. Indeed I have long suspected that his views are ultimately bent on England and the English Senate.'³ The apprehension was not unfounded, for on the very day that Haliday wrote Robert was returning from a visit to the constituency which he was about to be elected to represent at Westminster.

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 28, 1796: Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 8.

² I am indebted to Lord Londonderry for the use of a typescript of these letters which is in his possession.

³ Haliday to Charlemont, April 19: Charl. MSS.

The borough of Tregony in Cornwall had recently lost one of its members. The seat was in the gift of the Treasury, and Pitt, who had a weakness for promising young men, had offered the vacancy to Robert. Indeed, according to Londonderry, the Prime Minister had 'extended this munificence in the noblest manner—unsolicited and even unasked.'¹

Partly by reason of the fact that it was the seat of a royal duchy and partly because of its numerically large representation at Westminster, Cornwall was the principal parliamentary stronghold of the Government. It returned in all forty-four members, thus only one less than the number returned by the whole kingdom of Scotland.² For nearly three centuries this county had sent up a solid phalanx of Crown supporters to St. Stephen's. Its representation was almost entirely a matter of vested interest.³ Tregony, one of the mid-county boroughs, enjoyed what was known as the 'potwalloper' franchise; that is to say 'every inhabitant in the borough who had a family and boiled a pot there' for six weeks before a parliamentary election was entitled to vote at it.⁴ The borough itself was a poverty-stricken hamlet, and its burgess list never at any time exceeded two hundred names. The entertainment of the electors, who were all quite venal, was a simple and comparatively inexpensive matter, while the return of a member took place almost automatically.

Throughout the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth centuries Tregony was under the control of the great Whig family of Boscawen, but by the year 1794 it had passed into the hands of an Indian 'nabob' named Barwell, who obediently instructed the burgesses to return Pitt's nominees; hence it was classed among the so-called 'nomination' or Treasury Boroughs. Its two members had, of course, long since ceased to have any local connection with it, being usually insignificant placemen, who were anxious to obtain a seat in Parliament for what they could get out of it for themselves. But even in the moribund and corrupt eighteenth century there were exceptions, for such men as

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, May 24: Charl. MSS.

² W. P. Courtney, *Parliamentary Representation of Cornwall to 1832*, Intro. (privately printed, 1889); Porritt, i. *passim*.

³ In the eighteenth century seven peers directed the return of twenty members, and eleven commoners that of twenty-one members.

⁴ Porritt, i. 31.

Edward Southwell, James Craggs, Charles Talbot and Lloyd Kenyon had been brought into Parliament as its representatives. Some of Robert Stewart's relations had been similarly chosen. His great-grandfather, Sir Robert Cowan, had represented Tregony for a short time in 1737,¹ while his uncle, Lord Hugh Seymour, who held the dignified position of Treasurer in the Household of the Prince of Wales, had only recently transferred his attentions to another borough.² Most of these members had to purchase their nomination at the usual price of £2,500. Robert was more fortunate, since he had only to contribute the bare cost of his return.

He lost no time in accepting Pitt's generous invitation, and immediately set out on a flying visit to Cornwall, so that he might at least make the acquaintance of his new constituents. This was an act of grace on his part, since many members for nomination boroughs never once showed themselves in the constituencies which they had the honour to represent in Parliament. But when he took his seat at Westminster it was not without some misgivings as to the manner in which this patriotic conduct would be received by his other constituents in County Down. 'No doubt these gentlemen who with unwearied efforts and at great expense struggled hard and successfully for him,' Haliday remarked sarcastically, 'will think themselves well rewarded by his deserting that station they have raised him to and sinking into the mighty mass of the bodyguard of a Minister whom they and all good Whigs detest and execrate—at the instant too when he was become peculiarly obnoxious to them by his high-handed carrying through the House with indecent precipitancy the most formidable and unconstitutional measures which almost go to the establishment of Bastilles and Lettres de Cachet.'³ It is significant that his election for Tregony cost Robert Stewart no more than £200, a mere fraction of the expense to which he had been put in Down.⁴

On the very day of the return ⁵ Thomas Hardy, the founder and

¹ See above, p. 10, note 2.

² Lord Hugh Seymour, M.P. for Tregony, 1788-90.

³ Haliday to Charlemont, May 24 : Charl. MSS.

⁴ Estate Office MSS. (Accounts Journal).

⁵ May 12 : *Returns of Members of Parliament*, ii. 207.

secretary of a Jacobin organisation called the London Corresponding Society, was arrested on a charge of high treason and his papers were seized.¹ A secret Committee of the House of Commons forthwith examined them, and declared itself convinced that the papers afforded proofs of a traitorous conspiracy to dethrone the monarch and set up a republican legislature. Both Parliament and the outside public suddenly fell into a panic. A bill to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act was rushed through all its stages in the Commons at a single sitting, and in spite of the vehement opposition of Fox, Sheridan and Grey, who forced no less than eleven divisions, it passed by a large majority.² It was not altogether fortunate for Robert Stewart that his first appearance in the English Parliament should have coincided with the passage of such an unpopular measure.

In the remaining few weeks of the session at Westminster he was enabled to study its leading figures at close quarters, and he listened with marked attention to debates on the policy of putting an end to the war with France, thanking the managers of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and the need for suppressing 'pettyfogging attornies.' As soon as the House rose for the summer recess he set off for Ireland with his bride. *En route* they spent a deferred honeymoon by the northern lakes and posted on to Portpatrick, whence they embarked by the Donaghadee packet. They reached Mount Stewart about the middle of July, and Conolly, who joined them soon afterwards, insisted on immediately carrying off his niece and Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart to the summer quarters of the Derry Militia in Drogheda. This sleepy town became their home for the next three months, but its fortunate nearness to the capital did not render it objectionable. 'It is no unpleasing feature in having our soldiers at Drogheda,' Robert politely explained to Charlemont, 'that it gives me some hopes of being permitted before long to introduce Lady Emily to your lordship.'³ Both Charlemont and Haliday had sent their warmest felicitations to the young couple on their arrival in Ireland. Robert was delighted with these attentions, and they became again firm friends. 'I cannot help sincerely loving our

¹ J. H. Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*, 190.

² *English Parliamentary History*, xxxi. 497-525 (May 16).

³ Stewart to Charlemont, July 20 : Charl. MSS.

amiable reprobate,' wrote Charlemont to the doctor, 'and am the more encouraged in that sentiment from finding that you also, though in at least equal fear for his political salvation, still retain your affection for him. I am much pleased at his early visit to Ireland, which seems to indicate a frequent repetition of such visits. . . . And I am still more pleased at his lasting affection for you, since the man who is really your friend must in the end regain his lustre however it may be obscured by accidental clouds.'¹ But it was to be only a temporary *rapprochement*.

5

The Earl of Westmoreland had now been Lord-Lieutenant for over four years, and for some time past Pitt had been looking round for a desirable successor. Robert's uncle, Bayham, now Lord Camden, was approached, and expressed his willingness to go over to the Viceregal Lodge whenever it should be thought fit to send him. However, his expectations were soon shaken by the rumour that the ministerial ranks in England were to receive a substantial reinforcement from the Opposition, and that the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland would be one of the offices offered to the new-comers.² The Whig secession took place in July 1794, when the most influential members of the party joined the Government; these included the Duke of Portland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Spencer, and William Windham, for whom places had to be immediately found. In the consequent ministerial reshuffle the Lord-Lieutenancy was assigned to Fitzwilliam, who was to take office as soon as another provision could be made for Westmoreland, while the Secretaryship of State for the Home Department, which included Ireland, was given to Portland. Pitt apologised to Camden for this arrangement, but explained that the exigencies of the war justified a coalition, and undertook to provide for him later.³

The appointments of Fitzwilliam and Portland were not unnaturally hailed in Ireland with considerable expressions of joy. Portland had been Lord-Lieutenant himself when the Constitution of 1782 was granted, and he was known to favour Catholic

¹ Charlemont to Haliday, June 15: Charl. MSS.

² Camden to Stewart, June 28: *Cast. Corr.* i. 159.

³ Auckland to Beresford, July 27: *Beres. Corr.* ii. 37.

emancipation. Fitzwilliam, who was a large landowner in the country and extremely popular, was an ardent champion of the Catholic cause and a close friend of Grattan. He actually offered Grattan office in his proposed administration, wrote to Charlemont for support, and invited Thomas Grenville to be his Chief Secretary. He had conferences in London with the Ponsonbys, and openly spoke of making a clean sweep of the old administration, in particular the obnoxious Lord Chancellor Fitzgibbon and his *confrère* Under-Secretary Cooke, who were the most vehement opponents of Catholic emancipation in Dublin and the chief protagonists of the old 'Protestant ascendancy' system.

These proceedings produced a crisis in the Cabinet, where Pitt resisted the proposed removal of any of the faithful Castle officials and in particular Fitzgibbon, who in spite of his bigotry was by far the ablest member of the Irish administration. Needless to say the Whigs as a whole were most indignant at what they considered a mean trick on the part of Pitt in offering them the management of Ireland and then besetting it with obstacles. It is possible that Pitt, who really knew very little about Ireland, and in any case could afford to give scant attention to Irish affairs, realised that he had conceded too much to the Whigs and now wished to circumscribe their policy. It is doubtful, too, whether any of the Whig leaders, with the possible exception of Fitzwilliam, were more interested in the amelioration of popular grievances in Ireland than in the gratification of their personal desires for power and patronage at home. Pitt was therefore early embroiled in an ugly struggle with his new colleagues, and this was the position when the British Parliament met in November.¹

In these circumstances the Prime Minister required all the support he could muster at St. Stephen's, and he wrote among others to the new member for Tregony, who was still in Drogheda and, as it happened, was only too glad to obtain a short leave of absence from his regiment. 'I do not scruple to make use of the liberty you give me,' wrote Pitt, 'by saying that I think the most material part of the session will be soon after its opening, and that I should therefore be very glad if you can let me have your assistance at that time.'² In obedience to this letter Robert accordingly set out for London by the Donaghadee packet.

¹ Pitt to Stewart, Sept. 25 : Londonderry MSS. ² Lecky, iii. 245-245.

Haliday, who saw him before he left, hastened to communicate the result of the conference to Charlemont. 'I took the liberty of suggesting to him the delicacy and difficulty of his situation,' reported the doctor. 'This with his usual candour he took in very good part; but it will have no effect. He is Pittized with a vengeance which he candidly owns. He turned the tables on me, wanting to proselyte me, which was surely not worth his pains.'¹

Lady Emily returned to Mount Stewart, where for reasons of health she decided to remain in preference to accompanying her husband on the trying journey to London. It was the first time that they had been separated since the day of their wedding, and Robert wrote faithfully at every stage. Here is a selection from this correspondence: ²

PORTPATRICK, *Sunday*, 12 o'clock.
[November 16, 1794.]

MY DEAREST WIFE,

Nothing could be more fortunate than my passage. We crossed in six hours without the least motion. I slept whilst it was dark, and read *Udolpho* during the remainder of the voyage. I am sensible how much it cost you to part with me. The separation, believe me, is as painful to me. I have a dismal journey before me, the solitude of which will not be less felt when I am lodged at Inns where we have been together. As soon as my carriage is landed I shall proceed, and mean to sleep at Newtownstewart thirty-two miles from here. I send this by the Captain of the Packet who sails this evening with directions to forward it to you by express, that you may not have a moment's uncertainty in regard to me which I can remove. You shall have a few lines every night when I arrive at my stage, and I shall count the days with anxiety as they advance the moment of my return. God guard and protect you Dearest friend and wife,

Ever your most attached

ROBERT.

NEWTOWN DOUGLASS. *Sunday night*.

MY DEAREST WIFE,

I promised to write to you every day, and I have even the assurance to think a second letter at least for the first day of our separation will not be unacceptable. Since I am to pass the night in solitude, I must indulge in bidding you *bon soir*. As I advance in my exile I feel it more severely, and it will be some days before I shall be able to

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, Nov. (misdated Aug.): *Charl. Corr.* ii. 248.

² Londonderry MSS. Londonderry, *op. cit.* 9-11.

dissipate my regret by contemplating the Restoration. This banishment was not required to awaken me to a sense of the pleasure of being with you ; it is however a necessary piece of self-denial, and it is in vain to make wry faces when the dose must be swallowed.

DUMFRIES. *Monday night.*

I hope, Dearest Wife, you take as good care of yourself as I have done, the amount of two days travelling being only ninety miles. To-morrow I propose sleeping at Penrith. Don't you remember the fat hostess where we dined, the stage before Carlisle ? From thence I shall reach London with ease in four days ; that will be on Saturday. Nothing ever was so *triste* as my journey ; I feel our separation every moment more acutely, and shall lose my temper if the business at Parlt. should be protracted. My occupation on the road is a mixture of Paley—Udolpho—Morington and State papers. I grow tired of one after the other, and would give the world to be taken prisoner and carried back even in irons to Mt. Stewart. . . .

Tell Ly. Elizth ¹ I have begun my meat breakfasts. I laid a foundation of roast fowl and madeira this morning. Nothing could answer better. I feel unusually strong. Tell me, Dearest Wife, that you feel as happy as I should wish you to do in my absence. You are surrounded by those who sincerely love you and are anxious to make your time pass pleasantly. Cultivate my mother and Ly. Elizth, they are friends invaluable to those they love. . . .

PENRITH, *Tuesday night.*

DEAREST WIFE,

I have had a miserable cold creeping journey to-day—twelve hours in the carriage—and have not gone quite sixty miles. The roads are very bad ; however to-morrow will dispose of the worst part of the journey, and I expect to reach London with ease on Saturday. I cannot tell you how much the turn off at Newbattle recall'd happier moments. You may recollect the road on the other side of Longtown branches off to Langholm where we slept so comfortably. After this place I leave our track and shall not recover it till I reach Stilton. What a strange mixture of pain and pleasure there is in passing alone over a route which one has travell'd with a beloved companion. I am sure if I was lodg'd to-night in the little bed-chamber at Keswick, at the window of which we courted the first breezes of the morning, the recollections would be too strong for sleep. Remember you are to send me a little journal of all that passes. . . .

Farewell, Dearest Friend, I am going to bed and shall set out by daylight to climb over the Cumberland mountains. I would not take the pin money I owe you to go by the lakes.

¹ His aunt, Lady Elizabeth Pratt.

BOROUGHBRIDGE. [Wednesday.]

I cannot retire to rest, Dearest Dr. Wife, tho' a good deal fatigued, without sending you my blessing. Every stage that removes me further from you adds to my regret and makes the time which is to elapse before I again cross the Channel seem of intolerable duration. Perhaps the noise and bustle of London may dissipate the anxiety of separation which reflection uninterrupted dwells on with real pain. My day now passes without an event. I roll on from daybreak till long after the light is gone and, except the relief of reading, I have nothing to divert my thoughts from the loss I have sustained. To-morrow I shall endeavour to sleep at Newark. I shall then be 126 miles from London: the night after, probably at Biggleswade,—the remainder of the journey will be disposed of easily on Saturday. God Almighty protect you, Dearest of friends.

Ever your most devoted

ROBERT.

NEWARK. Thursday night.

... I have fallen upon a new mode of travelling, to explain which in my mother tongue I must inform you that I *sup upon my tea* and breakfast upon my supper; that is I take a meal of cold meat and Madeira at seven o'clock in the morning. This carries me two stages in perfect vigour—tea and toast then revives the circulation and gives me spirit for three stages more—mutton chops and potatoes (for the last of which I have taken a passion) sets me up again, I roll on two additional posts, take my tea, write my bulletin, and go to bed. Such has been my regimen and it seems to answer. I feel rather the better for the journey, and am in hopes that my appearance will not make any of my connection *miscarry* under the impression of being visited by my ghost. I expect Joe some day to go off in an apoplectic fit in the carriage. He is so well known on the road and his importance is established that he is feasted at every stage. I am regaled at every change of horses by alternate fumes of porter, punch, etc., etc., issuing from his rosy lips. His face is now a few shades deeper than Russian leather, his nose volcanic, and an accumulation has evidently taken place which would require *four boxes of analeptics* to remove. The weather is so miserably cold that it is impossible to ventilate the carriage freely, so that I live all day in the atmosphere of a cookshop...

And so on to 'the noise and bustle of London.' The chief topic of conversation was the treason trials, which had commenced earlier in the month. On the day of his arrival in town Horne Tooke was acquitted, but Robert did not find satisfaction universal that the philologist would only accompany Tom Paine and his

disciples for part of their journey, in spite of his counsel's declaration that 'they might go on to Windsor but he would get out at Hounslow.'¹ At St. Stephen's another surprise awaited Robert, for he stepped out of his carriage only to find that his services were not required. Parliament had been summoned for November 25; but at the last moment Pitt, who was suffering from a bad attack of gout and was still at loggerheads with the Cabinet, decided that he was too embarrassed to meet the House of Commons, and the Parliament was consequently prorogued.² Six weeks later it reassembled, but in the meantime Robert had returned to Ireland under instructions from the Prime Minister to be in Dublin pending Fitzwilliam's arrival and the commencement of the new session at College Green.

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The political crisis in London had had the effect of hastening Westmoreland's recall. The new Viceroy's powers were unfortunately not clearly defined, though it was understood that Fitzgibbon should remain Chancellor and that there should be no general change in the administration. Fitzwilliam landed in Dublin on January 4, 1795, to find the Catholic question being agitated on all sides. By his indiscreet conduct in previously broadcasting the news of his approaching Lord-Lieutenancy he had already done his best to fan the flame of Irish nationalism. His activities on arrival were no more exemplary. He immediately proceeded to dismiss Beresford, the immensely powerful head of the Revenue Department, and also the two influential Under-Secretaries, Sackville Hamilton and Cooke. Though pecuniary compensation was granted in each case, these dismissals took place without any overt acts of opposition on the part of the officials concerned. Then, not content with thus getting rid of Beresford, the Lord-Lieutenant went on to bring a totally unfounded charge of peculation against him, which later resulted in a meeting between the two men. (The duel was, however, prevented by the timely appearance of a peace officer on the field.) The Castle was in a state of absolute consternation, as preparations were

¹ Howell's *State Trials*, xxv. 330.

² *Eng. H. of C. Journals*, xlix. 745.



ROBERT STEWART, VISCOUNT CASTLEREAGH
AT THE AGE OF 25

*From the miniature by Richard Cosway in the collection of
The Most Honourable The Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.*

being made for a clean sweep of the old set of officials. Wolfe and Toler, the Attorney- and Solicitor-General, were next marked out for removal, and Fitzwilliam proposed to fill their places with George Ponsonby and John Philpot Curran, two of the soundest lawyers and most brilliant debaters on the Opposition side of the House. The Ponsonbys openly boasted that the country was in their hands, and complaints poured into London from outraged servants of the Crown.¹ The Viceregal dinners at the Castle were described as 'miracles of stupidity'; one half of the company trembled for their places, and, since they had been for so long hostile to the other half, not a word was exchanged between them. Fitzwilliam felt embarrassed, and rarely spoke himself. A guest relates how a long silence was broken by the Speaker of the House of Commons proposing a bumper 'to the immortal memory of King William who delivered us from Popery.'²

The new parliamentary session opened on the 22nd of January, and Robert Stewart found that he had been chosen to second the address of thanks for the Lord-Lieutenant's Speech from the Throne. It was a signal mark of official favour as well as an earnest of the good intentions of the new *régime*, since the proposer was none other than Henry Grattan. The Speech drew attention to the serious turn which events had taken on the Continent (the French had captured the Dutch fleet in the Texel and the Prince of Orange had fled from his kingdom to an English haven), and Parliament was exhorted to make the most strenuous efforts to meet the danger with which the whole of Europe was threatened by revolutionary arms. At the express desire of the English Cabinet nothing was said of the Catholic question, but the Lord-Lieutenant significantly intimated his 'cordial affection to the whole of Ireland.'³ Grattan reached his usual standard of eloquence in stating the grounds which demanded an unqualified support of the war from the Irish people, and Robert Stewart briefly echoed these sentiments 'in his drawling diffuse manner'

¹ See particularly Cooke to Buckingham, Jan. 15, Feb. 7, 1797: Buckingham, *Courts and Cabinets of George III*, ii. 329-30; also Lecky, iii. 270-73.

² Bishop of Cloyne to Westmoreland, Jan. 12: Dublin Castle MSS. (Fane Papers).

³ *Parl. Reg.* xv. 4.

(so Dr. Drennan rather unkindly observed).¹ There was scarcely a dissentient heard in the assembly, and the address was followed by a vote of £200,000 in aid of the British Navy.

Fitzwilliam lost no time in approving a solution of the Catholic question. Early in February leave to introduce an Emancipation Bill was granted by the House of Commons. This proceeding, which had His Excellency's benediction, provoked a curt note of censure from Portland, since the English Cabinet had not been consulted with regard to it, and a few days later the unhappy Viceroy was recalled. Though he had undoubtedly exceeded his instructions, his sudden withdrawal was in reality due to the intrigues of the Beresford faction. It was, however, particularly unfortunate, since it was generally attributed throughout Ireland to his advocacy of the Catholic claims. Parliament voted its thanks to him, all the shops in Dublin were shut on the day of his departure, and his coach was drawn down to the waterside by a sorrowing body of the most respectable citizens.² The event produced an enormous revulsion of public feeling against British rule, and marks a most important turning point in the history of Ireland. Henceforth the path of national resistance is clear. The United Irish organisation which the Government had long been endeavouring to suppress was now reconstructed on lines more attractive to the populace and more efficient to its leaders. If the objects of the society had once been theoretically constitutional, they now became frankly treasonable and republican. Members were henceforth sworn to an oath of secrecy, and an elaborate hierarchy was instituted of committees and directories. The conspiracy grew with astonishing rapidity, especially in Ulster. It also assumed a military aspect. Drilling took place nightly when the moon was up, and arms were stealthily collected into distributing dumps.³ There was talk of a French invasion, and Wolfe Tone was suspected of being in communication with the Directorate. Altogether the prospect in Ireland did not appear pleasant for the next Viceroy.

Pitt now found himself in a position to redeem the promise

¹ Drennan to McTier, Jan.: *Drennan Letters*, 541. For report of the speech see *Belfast News-Letter*, Jan. 26, 1795—it is not reported in the *Parliamentary Register*.

² J. H. Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon*, 20-36.

³ Lecky, iii. 382-3.

which he had made to Robert's uncle. Immediately after the announcement of Fitzwilliam's recall Camden was appointed Lord-Lieutenant, and at his request Robert hastened to London to confer with him on the situation. John Jeffreys Pratt, second Earl Camden, was at this time thirty-six years of age, and thus an exact contemporary of Pitt.¹ Brought up in the intense Whig school of his father, his entry into political life had fortunately for him coincided with the fall of the King's friends. At the age of twenty-one he had been appointed a Teller of the Exchequer under Rockingham, a sinecure post which he was to hold for the extraordinary period of fifty-four years. Under Shelburne and Pitt he had filled more responsible positions in Whitehall. Early in 1794 he resigned his place at the Treasury Board on the understanding that he was to go to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant, but the Whig secession which took place in the summer of that year had postponed his journey. One reckoned him as amongst the few intimate personal friends of the Prime Minister. He was of rather less than medium height, he possessed a pleasant round face, and he already showed a tendency to corpulence. Charlemont found him 'a plain, unaffected, good-humoured man of pleasing conversation and conciliatory address, and though in understanding he be not exactly his father's son or his sister's brother, yet does he not seem to be in any way deficient.'² Although he was sincere and straightforward, there is no doubt that Camden lacked the initiative and strength of mind possessed by his father, and he was liable on occasion to be easily overruled against his better judgment. A trifling reverse would throw him into the blackest fit of despondency. It should be remembered, however, that his new position was rendered peculiarly difficult by the 'Fitzwilliam episode' and the precise instructions which he had received from the Cabinet that any further political concessions to the Catholics must be resisted at all costs.³ Like most Englishmen his knowledge of Irish affairs was very limited, though he had honestly endeavoured as far as he could to remedy this ignorance by keeping in constant communication with his

¹ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xlv. 290; G.E.C., *Complete Peerage*, ii. 501.

² Charlemont to Haliday, July 26, 1795: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 264.

³ Portland to Camden, March 10: H.O. Ireland, 57; Froude, *English in Ireland*, iii. 158-61.

brother-in-law and nephew. He set out on his mission in an eager and hopeful spirit. 'I *will* go,' he told Pitt, with a nice regard for the future tense, 'and have a sort of confidence I shall succeed.'¹ His wish that Mr. Pelham might precede him to Ireland as Chief Secretary had been already granted.

Thomas Pelham was the eldest son of the Earl of Chichester, and like Lord Camden, whose senior he was by three years, a Whig by tradition and upbringing.² Good-natured and well travelled (had he not once met Kaunitz in Munich?), the new Chief Secretary entered his Lodge in Phoenix Park with the best intentions, but with the poorest health. He did, however, possess the advantage of a slight first-hand knowledge of local affairs. Twelve years previously he had for a short time discharged the duties of his present office, when he had endeavoured not without success to promote a better commercial understanding between the two countries.³ The intervening period he had spent mostly as an officer in the Sussex Militia, though he took occasional trips to the Continent and now and then went up to Westminster to vote with the Opposition. In 1794 he had followed Portland and the other Whig leaders into Pitt's camp, and was again marked out for office. He was popular with all parties, painstaking and conscientious—even the King admired him for his 'peculiar right-headedness.' He sympathised with those who objected to the reinstatement of Beresford and his friends in the Castle. 'I cannot boldly defend a job even in Ireland,' he informed Portland on his way to Dublin. 'The peace of Ireland is too great a stake to set against the interest of *any* clique.'⁴ On his arrival he found the situation bristling with difficulties. Fitzwilliam had been so injudicious as to publish a passage from a confidential despatch in which Portland had remarked that to defer the Catholic demands would be 'the means of doing a greater service to the British Empire than it has been capable of receiving since the Revolution.' The construction put upon this sentence by the popular party was that the intention of the English Government was, in Pelham's words, 'to keep the Catholic question alive and

¹ Camden to Pitt, March 1795 : Pitt MSS. 326.

² *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xliv. 252 ; G.E.C., *Complete Peerage*, iii. 196.

³ Cooke to Eden, Dec. 11, 1783 : *Auck. Corr.* i. 340.

⁴ Pelham to Portland, March 22 : H.O. Ireland, 57.

in suspense till a peace, and that then it was to be employed as the means of forcing an Union between the two countries.’¹ Pelham did his best to discredit this false and sinister rumour and at the same time to ingratiate himself with the various local interests, but in the circumstances his task was practically impossible. He was not physically fit for his work, and the cause which so frequently removed him from the scene of his official duties was to keep him for long periods out of confidential touch with his subordinates.

Lord Camden and his nephew followed Pelham a week later. The Viceregal party landed at Blackrock on March 31, and immediately proceeded to the Castle for the ceremony of swearing in before the Lords’ Justices. The procession, though sullenly received by the populace, drove through the streets without untoward incident, but during the ceremony at the Castle an angry crowd collected outside the gates. The Primate’s coach was attacked in the Upper Castle Yard, but fortunately for its owner suffered little damage. The Chancellor’s did not escape so easily. By lashing the horses to a gallop the coachman did succeed in forcing his way through the mob, but the latter made off by a short cut to his master’s house in Ely Place, which they reached before him. As the coach drew up some heavy paving stones were flung through the window, one of which struck the hated Fitzgibbon on the forehead, inflicting a severe flesh wound. (His injured feelings were immediately solaced by the Earldom of Clare.) The riot rapidly spread. The houses of the Primate, Speaker, and Beresford were attacked and the windows broken. Eventually the military were called out to restore order, and two civilians were killed.² It was an ominous reception of an unhappy Viceroyalty. ‘I really pity poor Lady Londonderry,’ wrote Charlemont, describing the incident to Haliday. ‘Her delicate feelings must undoubtedly be sadly hurt even by the promotion of her brother at so unlucky and critical a period. . . . Our friend Robert, whom I have not yet seen, is come over with him, and I am sorry for it.’³ A few days later Charlemont saw ‘our friend’ and, as he had anticipated, could give him ‘but little

¹ Pelham to Portland, March 30 : H.O. Ireland, 57.

² Camden to Portland, April 1 : H.O. Ireland, 57.

³ Charlemont to Haliday, April 2 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 259.

comfort ' with regard to Camden's administration. ' I cannot but love him,' he added, ' yet why so be-Pitted ? ' ¹ Surely, mused Charlemont, in a spirit of honest if antiquated Whiggery, ' both his head and his heart were formed for better things.' ²

After a short recess Parliament reassembled in April. As soon as the customary address of congratulation had been voted to the Lord-Lieutenant, Grattan in the House of Commons moved for a committee on ' the state of the nation,' and a debate ensued in which the whole of Fitzwilliam's administration and his recall were discussed. In duty bound to his uncle, Robert Stewart spoke strongly against this motion. He plainly showed that the late Viceroy had exceeded his instructions, and submitted that Lord Camden was capable of conducting an administration quite as ' mild and beneficent ' as that of his predecessor. ³ After a debate lasting many hours, at the close of which Grattan's speech caused such an outburst of cheering in the galleries that the Speaker ordered them to be cleared, the motion was lost by over a hundred votes. ⁴

In accordance with his nephew's expectations Camden soon made himself agreeable, and Pelham reported at the end of the first week that ' all who have been in the closet are very well satisfied.' ⁵ Both men, indeed, adopted as conciliatory an attitude as their instructions permitted ; one of the Lord-Lieutenant's first acts was to found the famous Roman Catholic seminary for priests at Maynooth. But they were pledged to resist any further political concessions, and Pelham lost no time in stating to the House of Commons that the utmost limit compatible with the existence of a Protestant constitution had been reached. Consequently when the Catholic Relief Bill, which Grattan had been granted leave to introduce in February, came up for its second reading on May 4, a well-schooled legislature rejected it by 155 to 84 votes, though not till after an all-night sitting. ⁶ Stewart opposed the measure with his former argument—namely, that no further concessions could be made to the Catholics without

¹ Charlemont to Haliday, April 6 : *Charl. MSS.* ; F. Hardy, *Life of Charlemont*, 380 (London, 1810).

² Charlemont to Haliday, Nov. 28, 1794 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 256.

³ *Parl. Reg.* xv. 168-70. ⁴ Ayes, 48—Noes, 158 : *Parl. Reg.* xv. 193.

⁵ Pelham to Portland, April 6 : *H.O. Ireland*, 57.

⁶ *Parl. Reg.* xv. 208-361.

endangering the present constitution and the Protestant Church Establishment.¹ He was one of the last to rise, only catching the Speaker's eye as the rays of the morning sun pierced the windows of the Chamber. But Beresford's son Marcus, who sat out the debate, classed him on this occasion among the best speakers on the Government side of the House. 'Robert Stewart is more improved than anybody could conceive,' he told his father. 'He gave George Ponsonby, who attacked his speech, a very neat cutting under the pretext of explanation, and managed matters so as not to be interrupted for exceeding the bounds of explanation.'²

This decision of the House of Commons on the Catholic question was final; henceforward it was to command little interest in the Irish Parliament. How far the removal of the remaining religious disqualifications in 1795 could have gone towards averting the rebellion which took place a few years later, it is not easy to say. A more potent preventive of civil war would have been a moderate measure of parliamentary reform, as Robert Stewart full well had realised, but such a remedy the corrupt and selfish legislature was determined to resist at all costs.³

As soon as the session was over Camden paid a short visit to his sister and brother-in-law at Mount Stewart. Robert accompanied the Viceregal party, and sent daily bulletins to Lady Emily, who was unwillingly forced to remain in Dublin with a sore throat. 'I did not take leave of you because I part with you even for a day with too much regret to exhibit it to others,' he wrote as they stopped to change horses on the first day's journey, 'and as I shall arrive too late for the mail at Dundalk, I send you my blessing from Drogheda our old residence and entreat you once more to take care of yourself for my sake.'⁴ The cavalcade progressed rather slowly, since His Excellency had to make several 'duty' calls *en route* and attend a grand military review near Belfast, which Robert pronounced 'very pretty—the 2 militia Reg'ts equal to the Derry.'⁵

¹ *Report of the Debate on the Catholic Bill* (Dublin, 1795) at p. 125.

² M. Beresford to J. Beresford, May 5: *Beresford Corr.* ii. 108.

³ Lecky, iii. 345; cp. above, pp. 99-100.

⁴ Stewart to his wife [July 15-16]: Londonderry MSS; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 7.

⁵ Stewart to his wife, July 18: Londonderry MSS.

They arrived at Mount Stewart to spend a quiet week-end, and found that a dinner party had been arranged in the Lord-Lieutenant's honour. A number of the neighbouring gentry were invited, including Haliday. 'Our dinner at the house and our dessert and symposium at the Temple went off very pleasantly and well—nothing the worse for Pitt's health not being drunk,' wrote the doctor to Charlemont. 'His Excellency has a noble appetite, no mean symptom; his father had such before him. . . . He seems very good enamoured and of cheerful conciliatory conversation and manners, and I dare say, seeing whose son and brother he is, by no means deficient in mental powers.'¹ Camden was delighted with the place and insisted on remaining another day. Robert was anxious to be away. 'Well pleased as I should be to extend my stay here *under certain circumstances*,' he explained to Emily, 'I cannot reconcile myself under the present. I received your letter by post this morning and live in hopes of another to-morrow. . . . You do not mention your throat, you only promise to take care of yourself. If it is not quite well when I arrive I will complete the cure with a little *Mt. Stewart* air. Everything here looks in great beauty. I visited your cottage, it looks deserted.'²

It was no more than a flying visit, and the party hurried off again to the south, for the Lord-Lieutenant had many official duties to which to attend, and the Derry Militia wished to see its Lieutenant-Colonel again. The various militia regiments in the country were now moving into Loughlinstown Camp near Dublin for summer manœuvres. The Derry numbered six hundred strong, and Robert felt justifiably proud of his men as he took his place at their head. Emily was proud of both, and she was much in evidence at the balls and 'public breakfasts' which she helped to organise for the amusement of the camp. In August the Lord-Lieutenant held a grand review (the total regimental strength was 19,000), and all the spectators felt confident that should the enemy pay their shores a visit they would at least receive a warm reception from the loyal Irish Militia.³

¹ Haliday to Charlemont [July 20]: Charl. MSS.

² Stewart to his wife [July 19]: Londonderry MSS.

³ W. S. Ferrar, *Views of Dublin*, 126-7 (Dublin, 1796).

7

Robert Stewart's rapid improvement as a public speaker had evidently come to the ears of Pitt, for the Prime Minister invited him to undertake an important duty at the opening of the autumn session at Westminster—namely, to second the Address of thanks for the King's Speech in the House of Commons. In accepting this invitation he carried through what probably remains the unique achievement of seconding the Address to the Throne in the English and Irish Parliament in the same year. The 29th of October, 1795, the day chosen for the ceremony, was marked by an unparalleled insult to the King's person. As George III drove from Buckingham House to Westminster, the royal coach was attacked by an angry crowd in the Mall and Palace Yard. There were shouts of 'Bread!' 'Peace!' 'No War!' 'No famine!' 'No Pitt!' and even 'Down with George!' One of the mob actually discharged an air-gun at the monarch, which happily did no further damage than pierce a small hole in the carriage window. The King behaved with great courage, and read his speech in the House of Lords quite calmly, but the return journey was scarcely less auspicious. Stones were thrown at the procession, and outside St. James's Palace the din was so terrific that one of the coach horses took fright and flung down a groom, breaking his thigh.

Meanwhile special motions of indignation at the outrage and gratitude for the King's escape were being carried by both Houses of Parliament, after which followed the usual addresses of thanks to the Throne.¹ In seconding the address in the Commons Robert Stewart made a polished though simple attempt to support that part of the King's Speech which dealt with the satisfactory progress of the war. Commencing with the customary declaration that he would not trespass upon the indulgence with which young speakers were commonly favoured (it was his maiden speech at St. Stephen's), he immediately went on to examine the leading features of the conflict. He pointed out, for instance, that France derived the extraordinary vigour which she had displayed largely from the operation of the system of terror. (The report is in *oratio obliqua*.)

¹ Lord Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, ch. xxi. J. H. Rose, *William Pitt and the Great War*, ch. xiii.

'The system by which Robespierre attained power and by which he governed was founded upon cruelty and terror. The present measures he considered as guided pretty nearly by the same principles and possessing much the same character. The severities which prevailed under the former were exercised under the present rulers. He adduced the instance of Barrère and his associates, and the practice of condemning men by military instead of revolutionary tribunals; both of which were equally repugnant to a government that affected to ground itself on the principles of equality, freedom and justice.'

In the remainder of his speech he expressed an unqualified approval of the war, and he concluded by paying a delicate compliment to the Prime Minister for his conduct of it.

'Had the right honourable gentleman pledged himself to negotiate with any particular form of government in France when pressed by the opposite side of the House, he should have considered him as unworthy of his confidence. He believed him to be actuated by no interested motives, and he trusted that he would be guided by no precipitate views. Anxiety and eagerness for peace would not, he hoped, allow our efforts to be broken; and he confidently expected that the period would arrive when we might look back to the exertions we had made, as having been employed not less in preserving the safety of our country than in contributing to the general security of Europe.'¹

The Honourable Mr. Stewart resumed his seat, conscious that he had made not an altogether unfavourable impression upon the assembly which he was one day to lead. An animated discussion followed his speech. Fox and Sheridan spoke strongly against the Address, while Pitt and Jenkinson as strongly supported it, but owing to the temper of the times it was carried by an unusually large majority.²

The attack upon the King merely brought to a head the economic discontent which had been growing in volume throughout England since the beginning of the year. There had been a considerable shortage of corn in the previous winter, resulting from the bad harvest of 1794, prices of food had steadily risen and unemployment had increased. During the summer several alarming riots had taken place, and Pitt's windows were smashed in Downing Street. This year's harvest was no better than its

¹ *Parliamentary History*, xxxii. 156-8; *Eng. Parl. Reg.* xlv. 5-8.

² Ayes 240, Noes 59: *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. 187.

predecessor, so that the country was now faced with the prospect of a serious famine. A few days before the opening of Parliament a monster meeting of the London Corresponding Society had been held in the fields at Islington, and a seditious 'Address to the Nation' had been read with acclamation advocating civil war as the only remedy for the prevailing economic distress. Pitt faced the crisis boldly. He immediately introduced legislation in Parliament regulating the use of grain and providing for the free importation of foreign foodstuffs, together with other measures to keep the price of bread within moderate bounds. Amongst the latter was a tax on hair powder, which hastened the disappearance of wigs.

To check further outbreaks of popular disorder certain coercive measures were unavoidable, and the attack upon the King simplified their rapid passage into law. A Seditious Meetings Act required the permission of a magistrate for all organised meetings of over fifty persons, and a Treasonable Practices Act extended the law of treason to cases where individuals wrote or spoke against the Constitution. Each Act was passed for an initial period of three years. That some temporary coercive measures were necessary at this moment is undoubted, since otherwise the King might have been assassinated, but it is open to question whether the lengthy continuance upon the Statute Book of legislation involving an obvious infringement of personal liberty was wise. (The Habeas Corpus Act had already been suspended.¹) The construction put upon these Acts by executive authorities was arbitrary. As Fox indignantly exclaimed, if he were to criticise in public a system of parliamentary representation which allotted two members to Old Sarum and none to Manchester, he might be sent to Botany Bay on the ground that he had declared his sentiments in a manner considered seditious by a magistrate.²

It was to prove of no assistance to his political reputation that Robert Stewart should have first attracted attention at Westminster when such unpopular measures were being discussed, and particularly that at this stage he should have been singled out as the friend and confidant of the most hated man for the moment in the country. Robert's admiration for the Prime Minister stood

¹ See above, p. 122.

² J. H. Rose, *loc. cit.*

the test of acute unpopularity. Both men were inspired by the highest sense of patriotic duty, but being both psychologically introverts they made no efforts to reason with the multitude, whose subversive activities they affected to despise rather than sought to understand. This may possibly explain why Castlereagh's merits were to shine so brilliantly in the public sphere most removed from popular control, and that when it fell to his lot twenty years later to introduce repressive domestic legislation he should have committed the same error as Pitt in too long delaying its repeal.

8

Meanwhile in Ireland the Lord-Lieutenant was suffering some inconvenience by reason of his Chief Secretary's failing health. Pelham had left the country in the early summer and was still absent. He had recently informed Camden that he doubted whether he could spend the next winter in Dublin except at a danger to his life, and he was now contemplating resignation. The Lord-Lieutenant, though not without hopes that such a trusty supporter might ultimately be prevailed upon to return, if only for the more important parliamentary business of the ensuing session, strongly urged Pitt to make a provisional appointment to his office. Even at this period he rated his nephew's capabilities so highly that he had no hesitation in proposing Robert Stewart as a most suitable candidate. Here is an extract from the confidential letter which he wrote to the Prime Minister on the subject :

‘ DUBLIN CASTLE, *November 18, 1795.*

‘ . . . I am not afraid of being supposed by you to make an unreasonable recommendation of a person with whom I happen to be connected, or of your construing that connection as the reason when I recommend Stewart to be Secretary here. He has gained very great credit in this Parliament and has great weight and an high character in the country. I am aware that there are objections to his being an Irishman, but when you converse with him you will find he has no Irish prejudices and I do not see any probability of this appointment being drawn hereafter into a precedent that it would be the least difficult to overcome.

‘ I therefore most strongly recommend Stewart to this appointment. I have written in the same strain to the Duke of Portland. . . . I am by no means wedded to my opinion as not to listen with the utmost

attention and desire of compliance to whatever personage you and he recommend, but I am sure you will have regard enough to my feeling to be cautious in this move. I should also add that I have never given even the most distant hint to Stewart upon this subject and am not at all sure that he would undertake the arduous task I have carved out for him.¹

However, both Pitt and Portland were compelled to admit the force of the objections to which Camden had alluded, and they did not feel themselves authorised at that moment to depart from the rule that the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland should always be an Englishman.² But, as it happened, of the two Englishmen whom they had in mind for the position, one 'absolutely refused' it, and the other declared that he could only accept it at the greatest sacrifice 'to his own feelings and to his health.'³ Pelham, who was now being urged by the Cabinet to resume his duties until another arrangement could be made, recognised the force of this argument and consented to return to Dublin for the opening of Parliament.

The short session which commenced on January 21, 1796, found Robert Stewart once more in his place at College Green. During the initial debate he ably answered a hostile amendment moved by Grattan, reviewing and defending at length the whole of Pitt's policy with regard to Ireland and the war. (The report is in *oratio obliqua*.)

'Falsehood and duplicity had been charged against the Minister of England. To those who knew the principles and character of that Minister, it would not indeed be necessary to urge arguments in his defence. If indeed it was falsehood in the English Minister to recall the Viceroy who had disobeyed his commands, the English Minister had been guilty of falsehood; but in his mind the Minister was bound by his duty to give that advice, and he would neither have been a man of spirit nor an honest Minister had he not given it.'⁴

The increasingly unsettled state of the country had now become a cause of serious alarm, so that the business of the session principally consisted in framing and passing measures to meet the emergency. A few months before there had been

¹ Camden to Pitt, Nov. 18 : Pitt MSS. 326.

² Portland to Pelham, Dec. 16, 31 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 101).

³ Portland to Pelham, Jan. 5, 1796 : Pelham MSS.

⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, Jan. 25, 1796. Not reported in *Parl. Reg.*

founded an organisation which was destined to attract as much attention and to produce as much sectarian bitterness in Ireland as the Klu Klux Klan has done in America. For years the lower orders of Protestants and Catholics had been at daggers drawn, particularly in the north, and as the result of a collision which took place between two rival parties at the village of the Diamond in County Armagh the previous September, the Orange Society had made its appearance.¹ During the ensuing months it is believed that over five thousand Roman Catholics were driven from Armagh 'to hell or Connaught' as the result of Orange activities. The movement rapidly spread to the adjacent counties, and it probably did more than anything else to convert the Catholic section of the community to the United Irish cause. 'Wherever the Orange system was introduced, particularly in Catholic counties, it was uniformly observed that numbers of United Irishmen increased most astonishingly.'² So long as this system meant no more than a defensive organisation to protect the lives and properties of Protestants no official comment upon it was made in Dublin, but when it came to involve ferocious banditti plundering and outraging their peaceable Catholic neighbours, even the reactionary Castle clique voiced its disapproval.

At first the remedy provided was of little effect, since the effete and partisan magistracy in many counties refused to carry out official instructions. 'The murders and houghing are shocking and make it absolutely necessary to attend to the administration of justice,' wrote Pelham in February, 'and I really believe that nothing will be more effectual than making the sessions of the Peace more frequent and more respectable.'³ An Indemnity Act was passed to protect such persons as had during the preceding six months exceeded their legal powers in the preservation of the peace, and it was followed by a piece of legislation even more drastic—an Insurrection Act. By this latter Act the administration of a seditious oath was made a capital offence and criminal procedure was changed in several important respects. It enabled the Lord-Lieutenant and Privy Council upon the receipt of a memorial from a number of magistrates in particular districts to

¹ Lecky, iii. 421 *et seq.* An impartial history of the origin and growth of the Orange movement is badly needed.

² W. J. MacNevin, *Pieces of Irish History*, 178.

³ Pelham to Portland, Feb. 15 : H.O. Ireland, 62.

proclaim those districts as in a state of disturbance. A strict curfew was imposed in such areas, and local magistrates were empowered to send suspected traitors and disorderly persons untried to serve in the fleet. Provision was also made for the compulsory production, registration and (if necessary) safeguarding of all arms in private keeping.¹ When this measure came up for its second reading in the House of Commons, Robert Stewart was appointed to act as teller for the ayes, but on Lord Edward Fitzgerald appearing as its solitary opponent he was glad that his services were not required, and the bill passed without a division.² Portland and some of the other English ministers were astonished that the Irish Parliament had thought fit to pass such a stringent measure, and moreover that it had met with no opposition. Pelham explained the necessity. 'It is the universal opinion in Ireland,' he wrote, 'that if this Bill with the alteration in the civil jurisdiction does not restore peace and give the laws and Constitution their necessary operation, we must have recourse to the sword.'³ The clouds of rebellion were rapidly gathering.

Robert Stewart did not wait until the end of the session, but as soon as the Insurrection Bill had passed its second reading he removed himself and his household to London, so that he would not miss the last months of the English Parliament. A general election was due to take place in the early summer, and a variety of subjects were down for discussion before the dissolution in May—he listened with grave interest to debates on the abolition of the slave trade, the propriety of a tax on dogs, the employment of bloodhounds in the war against the maroons in Jamaica, and the necessity of anatomising the bodies of felons executed for burglary and highway robbery.⁴

At the same time his mind recurred to a question which deeply affected his personal fortunes—what of the future? After nearly six years of political apprenticeship he was beginning to wonder whether some responsible office was not within his reach. Really his parliamentary record was not so bad, and there were many politicians of inferior merit at that moment enjoying official favour. But here was another point. Could this desirable goal

¹ 36 Geo. III (Ir.) c. 20. ² *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 29.

³ Pelham to Portland, March 31: H.O. Ireland, 62.

⁴ *Parl. Hist.* xxxii. *passim*.

be more easily reached at Westminster than at College Green ? (For by this time he had learnt from his uncle that the principal office in Ireland was closed to him on the ground of his nationality.) He remembered old Camden's advice on the occasion of his election in 1790, but circumstances had altered considerably since then, and he was now a member of two Parliaments. He finally wrote to Dublin Castle, and received a reply from the Lord-Lieutenant which largely influenced him in coming to a decision. His Excellency delivered a careful and well-reasoned judgment :

‘ DUBLIN CASTLE, *March 22, 1796.*

‘ . . . The grand preliminary consideration your feelings alone can determine, *namely*, whether you should make the politics of England or of Ireland your principal object. If you are determined upon the former an almost constant residence and in a great measure a dereliction from your Irish consequence must be decided upon ; and you should determine at all events to be a member of the next English Parliament during which you will be able to pursue your objects. If you should on the other hand incline to make this country and its interests your principal object, tho’ the being a member of the English Parliament is not necessary, it is always considered and may be made an advantage, and an absence from your parliamentary duty will be less marked by your Cornish than your Downshire constituents. There are few offices of business in this country ; but you are to consider, as you state an object of that kind to be necessary to stimulate your exertions, whether they are more within your reach than they are in England. If you therefore should decide that England should be your political sphere, give up Ireland as Lord Mornington has done. . . . In the former case I think you should suffer no personal inconvenience from the state of your circumstances to prevent your coming into [the English] Parliament at the commencement of it. In the latter case you may take your chance of some fortunate opening which may profitably introduce you into the House of Commons upon easy terms.

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‘ My residence here will of course cease long before the end of the next English Parliament. When I quit this country it would evidently be much more satisfactory to me that you should reside in England, and whilst I am in this country I am convinced you will endeavour to be *here* as much as you can—and therefore my inclination is that you should determine for England. I leave you to find out what is my judgment.

‘ I do not wonder at your difficulties. The politics of Ireland are certainly confused and as connected with other countries its cor-

respondence limited and its conduct of course without variety. . . . The importance to England of having this country well governed and attached might make it a very desirable object to make oneself master of its real interests by way of inducing England to listen to one's opinions as to its proper government, and in that issue the subject becomes more interesting.

'You know how I stand in England and Ireland with regard to assisting your determinations by any appointment here or by speaking to Pitt on the subject of coming into Parliament, but you are I am sure convinced at the same time of the anxious desire I feel to contribute to your happiness and to your consequence.'¹

Robert therefore decided to return to Ireland before the end of the summer, and to spend as much time as possible there during the remainder of Camden's viceroyalty, in the hope that within that period he might at least secure some subordinate office ultimately capable of bringing him into public prominence. At the same time a 'fortunate opening' of the kind to which the Lord-Lieutenant had alluded in his letter presented itself in the representation of Orford, a pocket borough in Suffolk owned by his uncle, Lord Hertford.² (The fact that the proprietor of Tregony was putting it up for sale again had caused Robert to withdraw his allegiance and seek a more accommodating patron.)

The session at Westminster concluded with an amazing intellectual duel between Pitt and Fox, which Robert Stewart witnessed on May 10. The Opposition leader spoke for over four hours, and in one of his finest parliamentary efforts moved an address to the King condemning the war. He was answered with equal brilliancy by the Prime Minister. In spite of the contrary views which the King and such sound advisers as Burke and Windham were known to entertain, Pitt was genuinely anxious for peace. Unfortunately the excessive demands of the French made this object impossible of realisation for the present. Overtures had been made to the Directory by William Wickham, the astute British minister in Switzerland, but when it was discovered that France insisted upon the surrender of all Great Britain's colonial

¹ Camden to Stewart, March 22 : Londonderry MSS.

² On the history of Oxford see Historical Manuscripts Commission, 17th Report, pp. 123-124, and authorities there cited which include indentures of elections of members from 1553 till the disfranchisement of the borough in 1832; also A. Page, *A Supplement to the Suffolk Traveller*, 184 (London 1844).

conquests at the same time as she declined to give up the Belgian provinces and other territorial possessions which she had recently annexed, negotiations abruptly ceased. Pitt voiced the public temper when he declared : ' We have long waited for the return of reason in our deluded enemy, and when they shall descend from those inadmissible projects which they seem to have formed, we shall still be ready to treat with them on fair and honourable terms.'¹ It was an extraordinary and unique debate, in which only the two parliamentary chiefs took part, and as might be expected terminated in an overwhelming victory for the Prime Minister.²

At the general election which immediately followed the dissolution Robert Stewart was returned for the borough of Orford, along with the patron's brother and his own uncle, Lord Robert Seymour.³ The new Parliament, which was summoned for July 12, only met to be prorogued till September.⁴ It was his last appearance at Westminster as a member of the separate English Parliament. His duties in Ireland kept him away through the first session, and when at its close a year later he accepted office in Dublin Castle he was compelled to vacate his seat for Orford.⁵ He did not seek re-election. His next appearance at Westminster was in 1801 as a member of the United Parliament which he did so much to make possible.

¹ *Parl. History*, xxxii. 1137.

² 216 votes against 42 : *Parl. History*, xxxii. 1138.

³ Return dated May 26, 1796 : *Returns of Members of Parliament*, ii. 207.

⁴ *H. of C. Journals*, lii. 3.

⁵ Appointed to the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, July 19, 1792 : *H. of C. Journals*, lii. 751.

CHAPTER V

THE PROGRESS OF THE CONSPIRACY AND THE FRENCH INVASION OF BANTRY BAY

I

By the summer of 1796 the United Irish system had gained such strength, particularly in the north, that the whole country was rapidly drifting towards anarchy. In spite of the impressive review at Loughlinstown camp the previous year Camden had little confidence in most of the militia regiments, and he appealed in despair to the English Government for reinforcements, or at least for permission to raise local yeomanry corps to augment the existing force.¹ The need of such a voluntary force was eagerly pressed by the Lord-Lieutenant's unofficial 'cabinet' of advisers (the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker, the Attorney-General, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Beresford), besides the Commander-in-Chief and a host of country gentlemen who were trembling for their lives and properties. Camden was further urged to summon Parliament for the purpose of suspending the Habeas Corpus Act. Since the information which daily reached the Castle regarding the leaders of the conspiracy did not authorise their being taken up, these dangerous agents were now openly carrying on their treasonable activities.² His Excellency was growing worried; he wondered, too, how the situation in Ulster would affect his relations, for he knew that there was the seat of the conspiracy.

Robert Stewart had lingered in England for some weeks after the prorogation of Parliament, visiting the Hertfords and the Ancrums and calling on some of his friends. He arrived at Mount Stewart early in August to find that his father had just

¹ Camden to Portland, Aug. 6, 1796 : H.O. Ireland, 62. Camden to Pelham, July 30 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 102).

² Camden to Pelham, Aug. 6 : Pelham MSS.

been made an Earl, a distinction which conferred the courtesy title of Viscount Castlereagh upon himself.¹ But he also found his father 'most completely alarmed—which is, indeed, the general state of people's minds.'² During the next fortnight the new lord made an extensive tour of Ulster on horseback, and his worst fears were confirmed. He found the loyal generally depressed and in many cases wavering in their allegiance. Crown witnesses were being frequently murdered, trade was almost at a standstill, and the Banks were only discounting short bills. Lord Hertford's tenants in Antrim were deeply involved in the treason, and it was gradually spreading to his father's estates in Down. 'I can have no doubt that there does exist a very serious affiliated conspiracy in the northern counties,' he reported to Pelham. 'Belfast is its centre, it is very general towards Lisburn, the county of Antrim has been largely infected and the county of Down is by no means exempt. There is sufficient information to ascertain that the societies gain ground rapidly, and that they have formed very sanguine and extensive hopes in consequence of the fatal turn affairs have taken on the Continent.' In Lisburn he obtained 'the depositions of one man whose information appears sufficient to convict six persons, two of whom are leaders.'³ The leaders were Samuel Neilson and Thomas Russell, principal proprietor of and contributor to the United Irish newspaper the *Northern Star*. Castlereagh now hastened to acquaint the authorities in Dublin of his discovery.

There was an air of impatience and uneasiness about the Castle, where the Lord-Lieutenant was being besieged by applicants for yeomanry commissions. 'I do not like to resort to yeomanry cavalry or infantry or armed associations if I can help it,' Camden admitted, 'but I see no other resource in the present times.'⁴ He begged Downshire and Hertford, the two principal Ulster landlords, to return immediately from England to their estates, and

¹ See above, p. 25.

² Haliday to Charlemont, Aug. 7 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 279.

³ Castlereagh to Pelham, Aug. 23 : Dublin Castle MSS. This information, which was sworn before a local magistrate (Rev. Philip Johnson) by T. Bird—*alias* Smith—consists of twelve folio pages in MS. It is preserved in the Dublin Castle archives. See information of Edward Smith, 1796 (Rebellion Papers).

⁴ Camden to Pelham, Aug. 28 : Pelham MSS.

he sent in urgent terms for Pelham to come over also. Castle-reagh had intended to rejoin his regiment, which was quartered in Limerick, after he had lodged his information in the Castle ; but when he heard what his nephew had to say, the Lord-Lieutenant decided that, as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made, he must return to the north and co-operate with Downshire in rounding up as many traitors as possible.

In the meantime there was the question of the yeomanry to be considered, and Camden invited him to attend a 'cabinet' at which he hoped to announce his decision. This unofficial body met in one of the Viceregal apartments in the Castle.¹ Castlereagh gave his views freely. 'Strong as the objections are to irregular corps in a country so lately extricated from their danger,' he said, 'yet I do not think it will be possible for Government without losing friends to resist the eagerness of the gentlemen in districts disturbed and threatened with disturbances to be permitted to arm for their own defence under commissions from the Crown. . . . It is always to be considered that this species of force is not the work of a day, particularly in a country where many motives may check the ardour of persons of property in actively belonging to it ; and yet, till the disposition of the mass can either be relied on or the means of restraining them secured, the army we possess, however adequate in discipline, if their disposition is to be relied on, which I do not myself entertain any doubts of, cannot be looked on as any defence against the enemy.'² The Lord-Lieutenant announced that the Home Secretary had given his consent under pressure of the emergency, and he issued instructions for the despatch of commissions to the counties.³

It should be borne in mind that the new force was entirely separate from the militia. As in England the yeomanry were volunteer cavalry and infantry, and consisted of corps raised by officers commissioned by the King or the Lord-Lieutenants of counties. They were, in fact, troops voluntarily enrolled for the protection of property and the preservation of peace in their locality, as distinct from the militia in which service was com-

¹ Camden to Pelham, Aug. 30 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 102) ; see below, pp. 232 *et seq.*

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Aug. 23 : Dublin Castle MS.

³ The scheme was officially announced on Sept. 19. See Richardson, *History of the Irish Yeomanry*, *passim*.

pulsory and whose object was to provide an adequate national defence force against foreign invasion.¹ Unlike the English yeomanry, however, the new corps in Ireland were to be paid, which Camden hoped would render them easier to raise and more amenable to Government control. It was inevitable that they should contain many violent Protestants ('I shall be construed as arming the Protestants against the Catholics,' ruefully exclaimed Camden in compiling the first list of officers²), but in spite of this element in their composition the yeomanry corps were on the whole much more 'respectably established' than the militia. They caused considerably less popular irritation than the militia, whose small and ill-disciplined contingents frequently usurped the functions of the yeomanry.

As Castlereagh had set out with the intention of ultimately rejoining his regiment in the west, Emily was left behind at Mount Stewart. 'I feel most sensibly your attention to my constituents,' he told her playfully, 'and consider myself as under the best protection when you are the guardian of my interest in my absence.'³ She received daily accounts of his doings. Charlemont, who caught a glimpse of him on his way to spend a few days at the Lord-Lieutenant's summer residence at Blackrock, was glad to see that 'our dear friend Robert, with wonder I speak it, is not the worse for being a lord.'⁴ Emily had no need for worry. 'The party here is very numerous,' he announced on his arrival at Blackrock. 'The Prices, Bishop Skeffington, Sir Hercules, etc., etc. We are going to-day to dine in town with the Solicitor-General and return in the evening. To-morrow or next day I shall go to Castletown. I slept last night in Lady Clonmell's bed, which is most extensive and unfit in all respects for a young batchelor as I am at present.'⁵ A little later he wrote: 'I have been quite well since I left you, and am pronounced by all here to be verging towards corpulence. I ride every day to

¹ *Manual of Military Law* (ed. 1907), 175-6. For a detailed account of these two forces see an admirable article by Dr. D. A. Chart entitled 'The Irish Levies during the Great French War' in *The English Historical Review* (Oct. 1917), xxii. 497-516.

² Camden to Portland, Sept. 3: H.O. Ireland, 62.

³ Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 27: Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 11.

⁴ Charlemont to Haliday, Aug. 23: Charl. MSS.

⁵ Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 23: Londonderry MSS.

keep myself within bounds, for you know my present life requires some regulating principles. Great dinners and eternal sleep are too much for my habit.' ¹ When he reached Castletown, Tom Conolly's famous place in Kildare, he found Lady Louisa 'in the midst of a harvest so abundant as to embarrass her in saving.' But Emily's absence made his visit so unlike all former visits that he declared he could not enjoy it, though 'Ly. Louisa was as kind as ever,' he told her, 'and in great hopes that your prudence in remaining at Mt. S. had its motives.' ² Again as he set out with the Viceregal suite for a grand review of the municipal garrison in Phoenix Park, he could not but wish that his 'favourite Aide-de-camp was of the party.' Indeed he missed her company badly. He had been hoping to get away on the day of the 'cabinet' meeting to which he was summoned at the Castle, and in his eagerness kept his horses waiting six hours outside the house in Merrion Street where he was staying. ³ 'I am already tired of my liberty,' he confessed, 'and would walk on foot to Mt. Stewart to recover my baggage and to return to my obedience.' ⁴

2

Meanwhile Downshire, who was Governor of County Down, had arrived in the north from England, and had convened a meeting of the principal local gentry at Newtownards with a view to raising a corps of yeomanry cavalry by subscription. Gawen Hamilton, a former President of the Northern Whig Club, strongly opposed this proposal as conveying 'a reflection on the county that was wholly unmerited,' but after a heated discussion it was adopted. ⁵ Londonderry and Cleland immediately accepted commissions. When he got back to Hillsborough Downshire found Castlereagh waiting with General Nugent and Pollock, one of the Crown lawyers, to arrange for the speedy arrest of the United Irish leaders in Ulster. They were soon afterwards joined by Lord Westmeath, who arrived with an additional body of troops. There was now a delay of a few days, occasioned by the

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 25 : Londonderry MSS.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 27 : Londonderry MSS. ; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 12.

³ *Id.* Aug. 31.

⁴ *Id.* Aug. 23.

⁵ J. Arbuckle to Downshire, Sept. 11 : Downshire MSS.

warrants which had to be sent back to the Under-Secretary's office for alteration, so as to admit of the more important prisoners being lodged in the Dublin gaols instead of the county gaols at Carrickfergus and Downpatrick.¹ At last all the details were settled, and it was decided to commence operations on the 16th of September in the neighbourhood of Lisburn.

On the eve of the *coup* Castlereagh slept in Lisburn Castle, a large stone mansion belonging to his uncle, Lord Hertford, and situated in the principal street of the town. He set out early in the morning on horseback with another magistrate² to execute the warrants, and had gone but a little way when he accosted Charles Teeling, a youth of eighteen, whose name appeared first on the fatal list. Teeling was riding along with his father, a wealthy merchant with whom Castlereagh had had some previous acquaintance. Addressing them politely Castlereagh turned and escorted them up the street as far as his uncle's house. As he was about to take leave of them, he said to the elder man: 'I regret that your son cannot accompany you.' At the same time he conducted the son through the outer gate of the Castle, which was immediately closed, and the young man found himself surrounded by an armed guard. After some expostulation, the father was admitted, and looking first on his son and then sternly on Castlereagh, he firmly enquired the cause of the arrest. 'High treason,' replied his lordship laconically, producing the warrant. After a short but painful interview the father departed. The son's horse was led home by a servant, but to that home its erstwhile young rider was never to return. Thus was the first prey captured. A search was now conducted in Teeling's house, and several incriminating documents as well as arms were carried off. In the course of the search, Mrs. Teeling hysterically demanded an interview with her son, and when this was refused the distracted woman turned on Castlereagh and exclaimed bitterly: 'I was wrong to appeal to a heart that never knew the tie of parental affection—your lordship is *not a father*!' Castlereagh was naturally not disposed to answer this charge at such an embarrassing

¹ Pollock to Cooke, Sept. 13: Dublin Castle MSS. The original warrants signed by Robert Boyd, Justice of King's Bench, are preserved in Dublin Castle, together with a list of those executed; the latter, which is in Pollock's handwriting, contains details of the arrests and observations.

² Rev. Philip Johnson, before whom the incriminating information had been sworn: M. MacDonagh, *The Viceroy's Post-Bag*, 24.

moment, so he silently retired with his guard, and having made several further arrests he joined Downshire, Pollock and Westmeath on the road for Belfast.¹

It was now shortly after nine o'clock in the morning. In less than an hour the party, which developed into a large body of cavalry, had passed the Belfast toll-gate and was within the town. The garrison immediately turned out, guards were stationed at various points of vantage, and 'there was every show of war.' The so-called *Siege of Belfast* had begun. The first house to be searched was that of Councillor William Sampson, where Neilson, who was a friend of the tenant, was suspected of being in concealment. Westmeath made the usual apologies on behalf of the search party, and then proceeded to examine carefully all the rooms, including that in which Mrs. Sampson was 'lying-in,' though her husband jocularly assured the soldiers that 'she was not, as some ladies are, in the habit of privately harbouring gentlemen.'² A burst of laughter greeted this jest, since it was understood to be a hit at Westmeath, who had just recently been plaintiff in an action for *crim. con.*, and society was still chuckling over the manner in which he had been fooled by his wife's lover.³ The noble Earl was not in the least perturbed, however, and he returned some time later to search the hay-loft and lavatory, which he had failed to notice during his first visit. The siege progressed. 'Most of the shops and places of business were closed; large bodies of foot soldiers, two troops of horse and a detachment of artillery kept marching through the streets, and hardly an inhabitant was to be seen out of doors.'⁴ Towards noon Castlereagh and the others adjourned to the Public Library,⁵ and a consultation took place in the course of which Neilson and Russell suddenly appeared and surrendered themselves voluntarily. When the other prisoners had been secured and carriages

¹ C. H. Teeling, *Personal Narrative of the Irish Rebellion*, 17-21.

² *Northern Star*, Sept. 16.

³ See *Trial at Large on an action of damages brought in the Court of Exchequer on the 20th of February, 1796, by the Right Hon. George Frederick Earl of Westmeath against the Hon. Augustus Cavendish Bradshaw for Adultery with the Countess of Westmeath* (Dublin, 1796).

⁴ H. McCall, *The House of Downshire*, 53 (Belfast, 1881); cp. McTier to Drennan, Sept. 16: *Drennan Letters*, 629.

⁵ Later the Linen Hall Library: then situated in Ann Street.

procured for their accommodation the cavalcade left for Dublin by the route it had come. The *Northern Star*, whose foreman compositor had been amongst those arrested, was furious at what it considered a serious affront to a peaceable and prosperous town. 'How long,' exclaimed the editor, 'shall it be thought prudent to submit to this rough riding of Attornies and Lordlings!!! It cannot be doubted that the town will express their sentiments and that every man, of whatever party or political disposition, will have manhood enough to censure this wanton bravado and contemptible invasion of their peace at a time when one honest measure would restore safety and satisfaction to every individual. Such a measure cannot be expected from such leaders. . . . Mr. Pollock, the Attorney, conducted himself with as much firmness as the *patriotic* Lord Castlereagh, the *disinterested* Lord Downshire, the *amiable, virtuous* and *accomplished* Lord Westmeath—with *manly* courage and *dignified* wisdom. In short they did that, by dint of *nightly scouting* and *martial* attack, which no human creature was disposed to resist, and which the meanest Constable in town could have done as well as they.'¹

Meanwhile young Teeling, who was confined in a front chamber in Lisburn Castle, had put his head out of the window, and was conducting a conversation with some of his friends in the street below. A crowd soon collected, and a number of them volunteered to waylay Castlereagh and assassinate him as he returned from Belfast, a course which the prisoner had the greatest difficulty in dissuading them from adopting. General Nugent, who happened to observe this intercourse, immediately had the prisoner removed to an inner apartment and placed under an additional guard. One of the latter, who apparently knew Teeling, offered to let him escape, but this generous proposal was declined. In the evening Castlereagh, who had arrived in Lisburn to collect the remaining prisoners, entered the room. Teeling noticed that he was fatigued and apparently much dispirited, in spite of his 'most fascinating manners and engaging address heightened by a personal appearance peculiarly attractive.' The visitor tactfully expressed regret that the prisoner should have been subjected to the painful restraint of an additional guard, and that it was not his desire that he should have been placed in such close quarters.

¹ *Northern Star*, Sept. 16.

At that moment a slight meal was brought in, and Castlereagh pressed Teeling to share it. The supply of wine was generous, and the two men soon fell into friendly conversation.

‘I have had much fatigue to-day,’ observed Castlereagh, adding, ‘we have made some important arrests.’ ‘Permit me to enquire the names of those arrested,’ said Teeling. ‘My own situation naturally leads me to sympathise with others.’ ‘We have arrested Neilson : do you know him ?’ ‘Know him !’ replied the prisoner. ‘I know him and respect his worth ; a man of talent and devoted patriotism—an honest citizen—the warm and disinterested friend ; and give me leave to add, my lord, the early advocate of his country’s rights.’ Castlereagh frowned at this remark, but after a momentary pause he continued : ‘We have arrested Russell.’ ‘Russell !’ exclaimed Teeling. ‘Is Russell a prisoner ? Then the soul of honour is captive.’ Castlereagh was silent. He filled his glass and passed the wine across the table. The conversation had become embarrassing and they changed the subject.

Teeling broke the silence. ‘May I beg to know, my lord, what are the intentions of government towards me and my fellow prisoners ?’ ‘You will be immediately conducted to the capital,’ was the answer. ‘His Excellency and Council will decide the rest.’ At this point the guard entered, and in handing over the prisoner Castlereagh desired that he should be treated with every indulgence consistent with their duty and his safe-keeping.

Outside a dense and almost impassable multitude thronged the streets. Castlereagh immediately gave orders to the cavalry to clear a way, but it was some time before Teeling, who was tumultuously cheered, could reach the market square, where the other prisoners were waiting in their carriages. The melancholy procession then proceeded on its journey to Dublin.¹ The accused were lodged first in the Castle, and were then split up between Newgate and Kilmainham gaols. It is worthy of record that Castlereagh was subsequently able to render several material

¹ Teeling, 26-30. The names of the prisoners transmitted to Dublin were Thomas Russell, John Young, Rowley Osborne, Henry Haslett, Samuel Neilson, Daniel Shannon, Samuel Kennedy, James Barclay, Charles Teeling, and Samuel Musgrave. See copy ‘List of Warrants delivered by Mr. Cooke with a note of what was done on them, Sept. 17’ : Dublin Castle MSS.

services to the prisoners. He transmitted clothes and other comforts to Teeling, and finally secured his liberation on parole.¹ Kindnesses such as these nationalist historians have largely seen fit to ignore in denouncing the brutal manner in which all the prisoners are alleged to have been treated when under confinement.

Castlereagh did not accompany the prisoners to Dublin, but remained in the north for a few days longer in the hope of making further captures. 'I was detained at Lisburn yesterday,' he wrote on the 19th from Banbridge, 'and last night apprehended a man of the name of Coghnan, a considerable linen merchant. I was out till three o'clock this morning and found three others gone off—the country perfectly quiet and the people in general very much rejoiced at the check given to these rebels.² A day or two later he called at the Castle and was warmly congratulated on the success of his mission. The rebel executive had been for the moment completely paralysed, and the loyalists in the capital were consequently as jubilant as their enemies were depressed. 'The greatest hopes are entertained that the best effects will follow from this measure,' wrote Under-Secretary Cooke to Whitehall; while Wolfe Tone observed in his diary that 'it is impossible to conceive the effect this heavy misfortune has upon my mind.'³ Meanwhile the rebel press in Ulster was still furious at what Haliday described as 'the unnecessary indignity which had been offered to the civil power and the unprovoked insult to the town of Belfast.'⁴ The following paragraph appeared in the *Northern Star* :

'DRAMATIC ENTERTAINMENT.

'A few days ago a very entertaining Puppet Show was exhibited to the public by his Majesty's servants called the SIEGE OF BELFAST, in which was represented the story of the *Attorney and Marquis* or *generosity* and *honesty*. This Piece we trust will be repeated in future to such of the spectators as would chuse to see it often. The taking of the prisoners had a grand effect upon the whole. It is a curious piece

¹ B. Teeling to Castlereagh, Oct. 30 : Dublin Castle MSS. (Letter from C. Teeling's father thanking Castlereagh).

² Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 19 : Londonderry MSS.

³ E. Cooke to J. King, Sept. 19 : H.O. Ireland, 62. Wolfe Tone, *Autobiography*, ii. 125.

⁴ Haliday to Charlemont, Sept. 21 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 284.

and gives a strong idea of the impression of terror without fear. The part of the *Youthful Apostate* who betrays his friends and insults his benefactors was performed to the life—at one time we were almost persuaded that this Puppet was a real man. *Punch in the hay-loft* also gave great satisfaction. The whole concluded with *Peace and Reform* which has always been the favourite representation of this town; and the scene closed with the humorous mock procession of *the worst First*—unluckily the Performers were disappointed in their fireworks and no lives were lost.¹

The issue containing the above notice was sent to Castlereagh in Dublin, and he chuckled over it. 'I was excessively entertained by the *Siege of Belfast* notwithstanding its severity upon me,' he wrote to Emily. 'Westmeath's services are incomparably celebrated. Pray what does Haliday say in cool blood?'²

3

Before proceeding to join his regiment in the west Castle-reagh had a conversation with Pelham, whom the earnest representations of the Lord-Lieutenant had prevailed upon to return from his beloved Sussex. They discussed the internal defences of the country, for Wolfe Tone was now in Paris and known to be plotting a hostile invasion of the Irish coast. The Chief Secretary was in favour of calling upon the militia regiments to turn out volunteers for special service, as had been done in England, but Castlereagh was inclined to order out special detachments. 'Irishmen are very suspicious,' he pointed out, 'and when you ask them to volunteer anything, they suppose more is meant than appears and make a great favour of their compliance.' Briefly, his plan was to select a company from each of the twenty-one militia regiments, forming the whole into a brigade of three battalions. When they had been assembled and put through the necessary training by experienced officers of the line, they should be distributed in the ratio North five companies: West eight companies: South eight companies, giving the preponderance to the South and West, since the North was less liable to attack. The correction of indiscipline in some of the northern regiments, whose men had been seduced into taking the United Irish oaths,

¹ *Northern Star*, Sept. 19.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 23: Londonderry MSS.

was also a topic of discussion. 'A letter to General Nugent would certainly have a good effect,' he said. 'A slight hint will produce a reform amongst his suttlers and furnish you with a proper subject for a capital punishment, which is in my mind the only thing calculated to awake the soldiers to a proper sense of their duty.'¹ Although this latter suggestion was acted upon, unfortunately his sane plan of defence was not adopted by the authorities. Had it been put into immediate operation it is possible that the French invasion, when it came some months later, would not have taken the country so completely by surprise and found it so unprepared as was in fact the case.

A few days later he reached Limerick, whither his servant had preceded him with 'the mare, also two bottles of steel wine.'² He found the Derry Militia 'in high good looks and the band to my surprise improved.'³ He was anxious for a taste of fighting, since he had lately received news that his brother Charles had been wounded in an engagement with the French in the Low Countries. ('I am in great hope that there is no reason for apprehending any bad consequences. Scars, if not too deep and destructive of shape, are a soldier's most becoming ornament, and it will animate and attach him more strongly to his profession.'⁴) But any hopes of active warfare in the west of Ireland had to be speedily abandoned. 'The news is so good there seems less chance of our *distinguishing* ourselves,' he told Emily. 'This you will not very much regret, nor shall I, notwithstanding the curiosity I have always felt to see a battle. I trust my campaigns will continue as they have begun—perfectly innocent.'⁵

He was still anxious about the state of the north. 'I see the *Northern Star* is full of abuse of my father and me,' he continued. 'Tell me what he has been about in the neighbourhood of Newtown and how the train-bands are likely to turn out. There are several corps raising in this country.'

¹ Castlereagh to Pelham [Sept. 25]: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 102).

² Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 23: Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 13.

³ Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 23: Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 13.

⁴ Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 31: Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 12.

⁵ *Ibid.* Sept. 23: Londonderry MSS.

His time with the regiment was shorter than he expected, for the Lord-Lieutenant ordered him back to town early in October to attend the Parliament, which had been specially summoned on the advice of the 'cabinet.' He made immediate preparations to leave barracks, and wrote to Emily to join him in Dublin. 'I go to the Chancellor's to-morrow to take leave—they have a very good house but rather a flat stupid place.'¹ When he reached Blackrock he announced a slight change in their arrangements. 'Lord and Lady Camden have just expressed a wish that we should be at the Castle during this short session in the apartments my mother had. They seemed to wish it so much that I think we cannot decline it—it being understood that we each go our own way. You may not feel quite so independent there as in Merrion Street, but it is only proposed on account of the shortness of the session and will be soon over.' He did not expect that Emily would 'find fault with any lodging which contains *us both*.' Since their marriage he had been accustomed to stay during his visits to town in the Conollys' house in Merrion Street, and he was glad when they moved into the Castle, 'since it will naturally lead to an explanation with the Conollys and we shall hereafter be more secure of our being welcome.'²

The session opened on October 13, and though it only lasted a few weeks it was peculiarly stormy and unhappy. The Habeas Corpus Act was immediately suspended, conspiracy to murder was made a felony, and a new Arms Act was passed. This repressive but necessary legislation provoked what were amongst the most violent speeches which Grattan ever delivered; he openly attributed the outrages perpetrated by the Orangemen upon the Catholics in the region of Armagh to the connivance and partiality of the government, and he urged complete Catholic Emancipation as the best precaution against internal conspiracy. The House of Commons realised that such a remedy would now be useless, and the last motion on the Catholic question in the Irish Parliament suffered an overwhelming defeat. Pelham, Wolfe and Castle-reagh answered Grattan best, and Sir Hercules Langrishe, the old Catholic champion, also voted with the majority.³

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Oct. 1 : Londonderry MSS.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Oct. 8 : Londonderry MSS.

³ Camden to Portland, Oct. 14 : H.O. Ireland, 65. *Reports of the Debates in the Irish House of Commons, 1796-7, passim.*

Before the end of October Castlereagh was recalled to the north to assist in dealing with the critical situation which had now arisen on his father's estates, and he was consequently prevented from attending the usual autumn session of the English Parliament. The letter, in which he sent his apologies to the Prime Minister and explained the progress of disaffection which kept him in Ireland, reveals a sound knowledge of the domestic situation.¹ It has been discovered among the Chatham Papers in the Public Record Office of England, and it is now for the first time published in full :

DEAR SIR,

' DUBLIN, 17th Octr. [1796].

I gave up my intention of being present at the opening of your Parliament with very great reluctance. The positive commands of the Lord-Lieutenant and the critical situation of that part of the country with which I am more immediately connected left me no alternative. I have since, however, had the satisfaction to observe that you have had no occasion for the support of your friends.

' I trust the vigorous measures which Gov't are now taking will carry this Country thro' the difficulties which have rendered them indispensable. Indeed I have no apprehension that the mischief existent within can ever be productive of any very serious calamity, unless the enemy should pay us a visit. The associations in the north are certainly as formidable in their extent as in the purpose they have in view. Like yours they have artfully availed themselves of the various descriptions of Reformers, and have bound together in one solemn covenant agst. the State. Nothing is committed to writing by their leaders—everything is managed by emissaries. The printed Constitution alone appears, which is in itself no evidence agst. the person in whose possession it is found. Their Oath enjoins the strictest Secrecy, and the whole is promoted by a system of intimidation, and guarded agst. discovery by the Assassination which inevitably awaits those who are suspected even of a design of proving unfaithful. I trust we shall be more successful, than you were, in bringing to justice the offenders now in confinement. If by examples we can alarm the inferior Conspirators, I have the greatest confidence that the spirit of loyalty, which has so extensively shewn itself in other parts of the Kingdom, in taking up Arms under the King's Commission, will not only discourage the leaders in their hopes of throwing this Country into confusion and of separating it from Gt. Britain ; but that a great portion of the Lower Orders must have as yet escaped the infection, will gain a degree of confidence, which their Landlords cannot at present inspire them with, and be prevailed on to shew themselves in support of the Constitution.

¹ Castlereagh to Pitt, Oct. 17 : Pitt MSS. 327.

‘ At present the impression is that the numbers and strength of the country is agst. ye Govt., and that their authority is maintained by the Army alone. Unless we can establish the opposite impression, this Kingdom will always be a prey to treasonable excesses. The Arming the property of the Country, and the spirit with which the measure has been embraced, will go a great way to produce this desirable effect. I am sanguine enough to hope, that the pressure of the present moment, in having driven us to provide agst. the foreign as well as the domestic enemy, may be the means of bringing forward the Spirit, and loyalty of the Kingdom in a shape so imposing, as not only to deter the foreign but to discourage the internal enemy from any attempt to shake us hereafter. You will have nothing to complain of as far as the Parliament is concerned, and I trust, that if the war is to proceed which is most probable, if one may speculate from the terms in which the Directory express themselves, that in calling forth the spirit and energy of the Empire to enable you to preserve it, that Ireland instead of being a charge upon the strength of the Sister Country, will be able to contribute her share even to the *offensive* exertion, at the same time that she provides for her internal safety.

I have the honour to remain

with sincere respect Dr. Sir,

Your faithful and obliged servt.

CASTLEREAGH.

P.S.—The export of linens has risen in this year to 62 millions of yards,—the usual export from 42 to 45.’

4

Lady Castlereagh did not accompany her husband on his next visit to the north, as he did not think that it would occupy him longer than a few days. In point of fact he was to be absent from her side for nearly six weeks. His letters to her during this period when he was called upon to exercise his most energetic and persuasive powers are particularly valuable, both in view of the inherent difficulty of his task and the physical dangers to which he was constantly exposed.

The country appeared comparatively quiet on his way, but when he reached Down he found that arms were being rapidly distributed by the rebels throughout the county. He passed a night at Hillsborough, where the only hotel was so crowded that he was informed that ‘ there was no bed except in another gentleman’s room.’ On finding that it was to be with a respectable

acquaintance he agreed to share a bed, and, as he told Emily, 'we both slept too sound to disturb each other by moving or any other inconvenient proceeding.'¹ Before continuing his journey he called on Downshire, who as Governor of Down was proposing to proclaim the county, or at least parts of it, under the Insurrection Act. Castlereagh had not entirely made up his mind on the wisdom of this move, so he made a note of the *pros* and *cons*, which he submitted to Pelham :

'There is certainly sufficient in the conduct of the people, in their frequent assemblages by night and by day, in the treasonable associations and in the repeated assassinations which happen, to warrant the measure if it is thought advisable in other respects. If the Government is of opinion that matters have arrived at that pitch of danger as to make it expedient to disarm the people generally, it certainly would be a most efficient instrument in the hands of the magistrate and the eternal persecution which the search for arms would occasion. It is probable we might be able to give an opposite impulse to the public mind ; but if it is merely in contemplation to patrol the county and take up people found abroad at night, the effect would be nothing and it would be idle to resort to the law. It certainly is a question deserving grave consideration, whether persons so generally armed as the inhabitants of this country are and so capable of using them, who have refused to use them in support of the laws, and who give such unequivocal proof of their disaffection, should be left in possession of those arms. By the Act in question were the county proclaimed we could order even all registered arms to be brought in and lodged in our keeping, and we could search generally and examine all persons upon oath as to their knowledge of arms secreted.

'I merely suggest these ideas for your consideration without having any decided opinion of my own. It appears to me a matter of but secondary importance what measure of authority is made the instrument of subduing the rebellious temper of the people. Some system of vigour must be acted upon, or the magistrates of this county who are disposed to do their duty must retire to the barracks of the troops and leave the authority of the country in the hands that have *now* a considerable share in it.'²

Downshire announced that he had summoned the local magistrates to meet at Hillsborough in a fortnight's time, but Pelham, who felt that it would be futile to proclaim the county unless there was a certainty that the magistrates would exert themselves,

¹ Castlereagh to his wife [Oct. 29] : Londonderry MSS.

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Oct. 30 : Dublin Castle MSS.

anxiously suggested that the general opinion of this meeting should be taken before there was any attempt to put the Insurrection Act into execution. Pelham therefore proposed to send up the Commander-in-Chief in an advisory capacity. 'I know the delicacy of your situation in respect to Lord Downshire,' he added in his reply to Castlereagh, 'but I think that Lord Carhampton will be of use to you . . . and you may be able to draw forth the county gentlemen without seeming to oppose Lord Downshire in his original plan.'¹ Castlereagh was in substantial agreement with these views, though he hoped that the Chief Secretary would not be surprised if circumstances were to cause the fulfilment of Downshire's wishes :

'Certainly since I came to the country I have had evidences of the extent and danger of the conspiracy beyond what I was prepared to find, and it is impossible to know that a country is armed in the degree this is, and to have a moral certainty that the people are preparing and look forward to employ those arms against the State, without entertaining the question whether it is wise to anticipate them or to wait for their attack in the gross, for in the detail we are at present suffering from it. The policy entirely depends upon the contingency of their receiving foreign assistance.'²

When he reached Newtownards, Castlereagh was informed that an attempt had just been made on the life of his friend and former tutor, the Reverend John Cleland. Cleland was now his father's land agent as well as the local vicar, and he also discharged the duties of magistrate with a zeal that was to earn for him the significant soubriquet of 'master of the croppy hounds'³—indeed at that moment he was hot on the trail of two tenants, leaders of the United Irish movement in the district who had lately given him the slip.⁴ For some time past it had been known that a number of the labourers on the estate with whom he was unpopular were plotting to assassinate him, and on the evening preceding Castlereagh's arrival in the town an attempt was made to carry out this sinister intention. As the agent was leaving the estate office a man snapped a pistol at him from an adjoining lane,

¹ Pelham to Castlereagh, Nov. 3 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 4 : Dublin Castle MSS.

³ Dickson, 168.

⁴ Cleland to Downshire, Oct. 26 : Downshire MSS.

but missed his mark in the darkness. Cleland heard the noise and saw the spark of the flint, but before his assailant could cock his weapon again he managed to fire two shots at him in return, but without effect, whereupon the villain fled.¹ About the same time as this attack took place, a tenant of Nicholas Price, a cousin of Castlereagh who lived at Saintfield, was told by the local rebel executive that if he remained any longer in his landlord's yeomanry troop he would not live, and this threat was immediately carried into execution.² Similar threats were held out to those who took the oath of allegiance.

Such disturbing incidents as these rendered imperative the presence of some regular troops in the neighbourhood. 'Surrounded as we are by conspirators with scarcely an individual who has the spirit to support us,' observed Castlereagh, 'a little military society is certainly necessary.'³ The swift appearance of several detachments of soldiers had an immediate effect upon the inhabitants. 'I hear that there is a considerable revolution in Newtown,' he wrote a few days later from Mount Stewart, 'and most of the principal people are disposed to take the oath of allegiance. My father has put it to them in a way which made the question plain and intelligent and left them no answer but rebellion and cowardice.'⁴

The tenants as a whole, however, were determined not to yield without a stubborn resistance. They continued to assemble in large numbers under the pretext of digging the potatoes or cutting the corn of any of their fellows who had been arrested or were fugitives from justice. Castlereagh described their activities in one of his letters to Emily :

'NEWTOWNARDS [November 7, 1796].

'I had an opportunity of seeing this morning a large body of potato diggers—it was a pretty sight ; a great number of young men marching along with smart girls leaning on their arms—they were going towards

¹ Londonderry to Downshire, Oct. 30 : Dublin Castle MSS. Castlereagh to his wife, Oct. 30 : Londonderry MSS.; Londonderry, *op. cit.* 13.

² Camden to Portland, Nov. 1 : H.O. Ireland, 62. Cleland to Cooke, Nov. 7 : Dublin Castle MSS.

³ Castlereagh to Pelham, Oct. 30 : Dublin Castle MSS.

⁴ Castlereagh to his wife [Nov. 8] : Londonderry MSS.; London-derry, *op. cit.* 13.

Comber to dig Maxwell's potatoes.¹ I rode some distance with them and had a good deal of funny conversation ; you may easily conceive I neither scolded nor attempted to argue them out of their intentions. We had a great number of jokes and nothing could be more good-humoured than they were to me. I went over to enquire after some arms that were stolen last night from the soldiers. . . .'

This strange company behaved in a perfectly orderly manner, and marched through Comber in military formation with an officer in front and rear, each file having a girl to gather the potatoes. ' I never saw a finer race of young men, full of zeal in a cause which they are made to feel a good one.' ² His excursion to Comber was caused by ' a very daring act ' of the local rebels, who took advantage of the slumbers of a body of Dragoons stationed there to enter their stables and remove all the weapons within reach. ' Not having any military assistance,' wrote Castlereagh in transmitting an account of the robbery to Pelham, ' and having many hundreds of the enemy digging Maxwell's potatoes within half a mile, I could not attempt to make any search. I only took the examinations of the parties.' ²

Information was now to hand that an important meeting of the provincial directory of the United Irishmen was to be held at Portaferry on November 9. This news had come to Castlereagh through Mr. Patrick Savage, the local landlord ; and so on the morning of the stated day he set out for that neighbourhood accompanied by his informant. Their business was soon finished. ' We apprehended six men in about an hour,' he told Emily, which I hope will bring the people to their senses.' ³ Most of the rebels were seized with their papers as they were going to the meeting, and they were all transmitted under guard to Dublin.⁴ An important document found in the possession of the provincial secretary estimated that the total number of United Irish in the country was about 57,000, of which more than half belonged to the counties of Down and Antrim.⁵ From Portaferry Castlereagh

¹ Maxwell was one of the tenants whom Cleland had been trying to catch. Cleland to Downshire, Oct. 25 : Downshire MSS.

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 7 : Dublin Castle MSS.

³ Castlereagh to his wife, Nov. 9 : Londonderry MSS.

⁴ Castlereagh to Cooke, Nov. 9 : Dublin Castle MSS.

⁵ Camden to Portland, Nov. 13 : H.O. Ireland, 62. This document, which contained valuable details regarding the constitution and strength

proceeded to Belfast, where by arrangement he met the Commander-in-Chief, Carhampton, who had just arrived from the south. Before going on to Hillsborough for the magistrates' meeting they succeeded in catching several more 'principal rebels.'¹ These included four leaders of the so-called Assassination Committee, a secret body of United Irishmen which marked out and actually ordered for assassination persons suspected of having betrayed the society to the government. Since Carhampton's arrival they had pulled off their green coats and met under the guise of freemasons. They were arrested on a charge of conspiracy to murder, an offence which had recently been made capital.² Passing through Lisburn Castlereagh was pleased to find that Lord Hertford's tenants had become 'very loyal,' and he was immediately able to raise a yeomanry corps of 1,300, including seventy cavalymen, on the estate.³

The meeting at Hillsborough 'went off very well,' but it resulted in the proclamation of several portions of the county under the Insurrection Act.⁴ Castlereagh was careful to explain to Pelham the part which he took at it, in view of the correspondence which had recently passed between them.

'The districts which have been named for Proclamation are disturbed precisely in the way it was in the contemplation of those who formed the law in question to remedy—large bodies of men breaking houses, robbery, committing murder by night, confined to no party and continued up even to the night which preceded our meeting. Every gentleman of the district (one excepted, differing merely whether his own parish ought to be included) desired the measure, and Lord Downshire answered for the vigorous execution of the law if the terror of the measure did not tranquillize the district. Under the circumstances I thought I could not in justice to the gentlemen and to the peace of a quarter so disturbed hesitate to join in the application.'

of the United Irish movement, was subsequently published in the *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords*, May 10, 1797, Appendix IV.

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Nov. 11 : Londonderry MSS.

² Carhampton to Pelham, Nov. 15 : Pelham MSS. *Belfast News-Letter*, Nov. 18. *Northern Star*, Nov. 18. Camden to Portland, Dec. 13 : H.O. Ireland, 62. Information of E. Newell : Dublin Castle MSS.

³ Castlereagh to his wife, Nov. 12 : Londonderry MSS.

⁴ The parishes proclaimed were five in number and adjoined County Armagh.

Castlereagh had not failed to bear in mind that the Insurrection Act was aimed at isolated tumultuous disturbances, and not primarily at secret associations. Therefore when it was proposed at the meeting to extend the proclamation so as to cover those districts where the associations were in force, he spoke strongly against the motion, and it was subsequently dropped.

‘The policy of proclaiming other parts of the county where an evil of a much more alarming nature prevails but not of such marked tumult remains as it did before—open for your consideration and for the experiment you wish to try, namely how far the Proclamation and the efforts of the magistrates may mitigate the evil.’¹

When he returned to Mount Stewart, Castlereagh found a message from his commanding officer requesting him to rejoin the regiment as soon as possible. He sent his excuses through Emily. ‘Pray tell Mr. Conolly that he cannot be more impatient of my joining the Regt. than I am, but circumstanced as this country has been I am sure he would not have wished me. . . . I could not with my character leave the north at present—a week more will disclose much as to quarters in which my duties be most pressing and in which of course I must abide. . . . Everything in this neighbourhood remains perfectly quiet, and I think the countenances of the people are more amiable since the arrival of the troops. My father’s tenants remain in statu quo. . . . A last effort has been made to take from them all excuse of ignorance, and although I do not expect much success from it, yet it will ascertain more distinctly their temper and put them more evidently in the wrong.’² He rode incessantly round the estates, and for days he was scarcely out of the saddle. His chief obstacle lay in the fact that both those tenants whose loyalty had never been in question and others who could be won over by reasoning were afraid to come forward and take the oath of allegiance, since by so doing they would render themselves an easy prey to United Irish vengeance. Castlereagh realised that he must endeavour to persuade them to come forward in a body. A little later he wrote : ‘I hope to be able in a few days to settle my movements. The fact is I wish to be gone, yet I really feel that I can do more good here than on parade in Limerick ; and when I have remained so

¹ Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 12 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Nov. 13-14 : Londonderry MSS.

long in the north without you, Mr. Conolly ought to give me credit for being at least disinterested. I wish if possible to effect something with my father's people before I leave this country—they are at present wavering, and it is at present uncertain what may be the event.'¹ His work was interrupted by the autumn meeting of the Down Hunt, at which he was rather unwillingly compelled to be present. 'Nothing can be less suited to me than this famous jubilee,' he wrote to his wife from the club rooms in Downpatrick. 'I feel more impatient under it than any of the other duties which keep me separate from you, because the utility is more remote. The meeting is very ill attended. We generally continue at the bottle till past ten o'clock, and the conversation is absolute humdrum.'²

Emily was now becoming uneasy, for Robert had already been away three weeks and there was no word of his return. In reply to her remonstrances he was therefore at some pains to point out the paramount necessity of his remaining in the north a short while longer. 'The cause of my delay I am sure you will understand,' he said. 'It is not the Down Hunt: I am already satiated with the festivity and society of that illustrious meeting. The true motive is the fluctuating state of the tenantry. My father's papers and other causes have in some measure broke the combination against the oath of allegiance, and several of the principal people have subscribed a paper declaring their readiness to conform to my father's wishes. They are to meet us on Monday [the 21st] for that purpose and I have invited them to dine with me at the Market House after the business is over. Although things look favourable, yet I am inclined to distrust everything in these times and expect some blow up will again happen. I have set the same thing agoing at Comber and wished to meet them on Tuesday, but I find it will not be sufficiently advanced to admit of it. You see then the necessity of my remaining a few days; for you will allow, if I should succeed in giving a turn to the unfortunate spirit which prevails, that for my future repose and present credit, it will be worth while.'³ His letters during the next few days reflect him in a characteristic mood. 'I am

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Nov. 15: Londonderry MSS.

² *Id.* Nov. 16.

³ *Id.* Nov. 19.

now, dearest Emily, like a schoolboy before the holidays,' he wrote on November 22. 'I count every day, every hour, which is yet to elapse before we are to meet, and with all my anxiety, I cannot absolutely ascertain the moment with precision. The business of Monday was postponed till to-morrow. How it will go off it is impossible to foresee, but there is that species of fluctuation in this neighbourhood that I cannot reconcile it to myself not to make every effort to redeem the people if possible.'

The meeting with the tenants at Newtownards showed that his work had not been in vain. 'Between three and four hundred took the oath of allegiance yesterday,' he triumphantly announced on the 24th. 'They did it with every mark of sincerity after the ice had been broken and their panic a little removed. They had been much deceived and much threatened. We had a very jolly dinner. Cleland quite drunk, Sinclair¹ considerably so, my father not a little, others lying heads and points, the whole very happy, and God Save the King and Rule Britannia declared permanent.' Monsieur de Latocnaye, a French traveller who happened to be on a visit to Mount Stewart at this time, was much amused by the tenants' shyness, but he was equally impressed by the energy which the landlord and his son both displayed. '*L'Homme est mouton toujours*,' he observed; '*ils ont eu beaucoup de peine à avoir les dix ou douze premiers et dans les jours suivants il en est présenté près de sept à huit cents*.'² Castlereagh's task was now almost finished, but before his departure he was able, in addition to winning over the tenantry, to form from their ranks the nucleus of a troop of yeoman horse. On the 27th he wrote reassuringly to Emily: 'Without failing in any material duty I hope a few days will now unite us, and when the delay is gone by we shall neither of us regret a sacrifice which has enabled me to contribute in some degree to an alteration for the better in the temper of the country. On the first day three hundred and forty took the oath, this day five hundred and thirty, in all eight hundred and seventy in the parish of Newtown. On Tuesday we are to attend at the parish of Comber. We have got thirty-four

¹ Rev. William Sinclair, Presbyterian Minister in Newtownards. He refused at first to take the oath, but subsequently consented under pressure. McTier to Drennan, Nov.: *Drennan Letters*, 640.

² De Latocnaye, *Promenade d'un Français dans l'Irlande*, 254.

cavalry and expect to complete a troop of rich farmers. I do not mean to encourage infantry, of which we might have a large force, since it is better not to presume too much on so new a spirit.'

When he did in fact leave Mount Stewart less than a week later Castlereagh had the satisfaction of knowing that no less than 1,700 men on the estate had taken the oath of allegiance, and that yeoman corps could be formed to any amount, though in the latter only those were enrolled upon whom he and his father felt that they could absolutely depend. Londonderry was really alarmed at so sudden a conversion, since a week or two earlier not a man could be induced to take the oath; but his brother-in-law Camden felt certain that the change was primarily due to the eloquence and industry of his son Castlereagh, who had reasoned with the tenantry and (he hoped) convinced them of their errors. 'He has conducted himself with infinite skill, ability, and spirit upon various occasions lately,' reported the Lord-Lieutenant to the Home Secretary in Whitehall, 'and has done more to bring those persons who had been attempted to be corrupted to a proper sense of reflection and to punish those who are guilty than perhaps any man in the north of Ireland.'¹

5

Emily was overjoyed to see Robert safe again in Merrion Street, and she insisted on bearing him company to Limerick. Their stay together in these quarters was very short; before Christmas came they were parted once more. On December 23 news was received from General Dalrymple, who was in command of the small English force at Cork, that a French fleet had been sighted off Bantry Bay. Immediate orders were given to concentrate all available troops in the neighbourhood of the south-west coast and prepare for an enemy invasion.² At the same time the Lord-Lieutenant ordered that in view of the severity of the weather all those on active service should be supplied with 'a proportion of spirit upon their route'; His Excellency also 'directed an allowance of fourpence a day to their wives until their return.'³ On

¹ Camden to Portland, Dec. 13: H.O. Ireland, 62.

² Lecky, iii. 529 *et seq.* P. B. Bradley, *Bantry Bay*, *passim*.

³ Camden to Portland, Jan. 10, 1797: H.O. Ireland, 71.

Christmas Eve, Castlereagh marched out of Limerick at the head of a detachment numbering five hundred strong. On the first day they covered fifteen miles of mountainous country and slept at Bruff. Next day they pushed on to Charleville, whence among the Lieutenant-Colonel's despatches was one to the anxious Emily, who had been left behind with her uncle to return to Dublin.

‘ CHARLEVILLE, 25th, 2 o'clock forenoon.

‘ It is impossible to describe what I felt, Dearest Friend, yesterday at parting with you. I never shall forget the affection and firmness with which you went thro’ a scene certainly the most trying to those who love : but the first effort made, your reason will in a great measure tranquillize your mind, and nothing on my part shall be wanting to give you frequent intelligence ; but you must not look for regularity in my accounts—our situation and employment may make it impossible. I long to hear of your arrival in Dublin. . . .

‘ We reached Bruff last night about six o'clock. The weather was charming, a little cold, but marching on foot I did not feel it. Mr. Whiskey had done a little mischief in our ranks, but upon the whole for a first day's march (taking leave of sweethearts, and parting with the inhabitants, who brought spirits in quantities to them when they were chilled on the street waiting for stores which they never received) we did fairly well. I have, however, this day declared war against Whiskey and it will not retard us again. We marched this morning at 8 o'clock, and we shall reach Mallow to-morrow. Nothing can be more kind and attentive than the people are to us. Our 500 men are very well taken care of, and we shall eat our Xmas dinner with the Mayor of the town. . . .

‘ I rely upon your writing every post ; it will be the greatest luxury, and will keep me warm in all weathers. Direct to Mallow till you hear to the contrary, and tell me everything that passes. We march to-morrow at 8. The men are in great spirits, and very much afraid that the navy will run away with their credit from them. Farewell, dearest best friend.

Ever your most devoted

CASTLEREAGH.’

They reached Mallow on the evening of Boxing Day, and eagerly awaited news from headquarters. ‘ We have received no further orders,’ their commander noted on arrival, ‘ and the reports from Cork are so contradictory that we are in doubt whether the fleet is French or English, and whether it ever anchored or not, and this

day it is said to have been driven by the storm of Sunday night ¹ to sea. There seems therefore but little chance of the army gaining anything beyond what zeal may entitle them to.' ² In spite of the warning which he had given Emily in his first letter, he contrived to keep her in touch with all his movements.

' MALLOW, 29th.

' We are ordered to Cork, and shall probably move towards Bandon to make room for other troops. Our men are grown impatient, but I believe there is very little hope of their being indulged in with anything except marching. . . . We are all quite well and recruited by a day's rest. Remember you are a soldier's wife and must have no care now you are allowed fourpence a day in my absence.'

They reached their destination in a few hours, so that later in the day Castlereagh was able to add a postscript to his letter above.

' CORK, 2 o'clock.

' I am just arrived to find the wind has saved us the trouble of driving the French away. There is not a ship left in Bantry Bay ; it is said that some have foundered and that others have been taken, but all that I can collect in the confusion of Gen. Stewart's orderly room—all his aide-de-camps being complete fools—is that they are gone, and that there is a prospect that they may fall into the hands of the English fleet.' ³

The condition of the French fleet was indeed as unfortunate as Castlereagh described it. Of the forty-three vessels which had set sail from Brest in high hopes a fortnight before under Hoche, only thirty-five had succeeded in sighting the Irish coast, and those were in very ragged formation. After battling with a fearful storm for several days they had been eventually driven to sea again, two of their number being captured and six perishing by foundering or sinking. A few ships did manage to return to Bantry Bay some days later ; but, as it was still impossible to effect a landing, they sailed away again without doing any damage. The difficulties of the expedition were increased by a lamentable lack of skill on the part of its commanders, by the fact that the ship containing Hoche got lost and never appeared at all, and by the violent quarrels which took place between Grouchy, Hoche's

¹ December 25.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Dec. 27 : Londonderry MSS.

³ Londonderry, *op. cit.* 14.

second-in-command, and Bouvet, the admiral.¹ Had they set sail a few days earlier and so been able to disembark the 15,000 well-trained troops which were on board, there is little doubt that Cork would easily have fallen into their hands (as Dalrymple feared), and the news of this disaster would certainly have caused an open rising in Ulster, and probably in the other provinces as well.² Such a narrow escape from hostile invasion was nothing short of providential for Ireland, since the country lay unprotected by an English fleet for twelve days and when the French came in view *less than 3,000 men in all* could be rushed to Bantry. This meagre force had only two pieces of artillery, and no magazine and neither adequate provisions nor accommodation. The lethargic conduct of the Admiralty and the War Office fully deserved the severe censure which it afterwards received at the hands of Whitbread and his friends in the English Parliament.³

When the French ships were driven out to sea again by the gale, which had been blowing since Christmas Day, the Derry Militia was ordered back to Limerick. 'It is thought advisable to take our old positions lest the enemy should move northwards,' the commander explained to his wife the day after their arrival in Cork, 'but this is merely a precaution, and their fleet must have suffered so considerably from the weather that I should think their return to France would be as much as they would look to.'⁴ The next day found him back in Mallow, somewhat perplexed. 'What is to become of us I cannot yet foresee; we are in the habit of receiving orders both from Dalrymple and Smith. The first considers us his property, Mallow being in his district—the latter as *having* belonged to him; so we shall perhaps find it difficult to obey both.'⁵ Our Reg't, notwithstanding its fatigue, with the exception of six or eight lame soldiers is in a very good

¹ See the accurate and graphic description of the expedition given by Wolfe Tone in his diary: *Autobiography*, ii. 152-177. Tone, who held a commission in the French army, was on board the *Indomptable*.

² Dalrymple to Pelham, Dec. 26: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 102).

³ Bradley, 96 *et seq.*, 160-182.

⁴ Castlereagh to his wife, Dec. 30: Londonderry MSS.

⁵ Cp. the English Commander-in-Chief's opinion: 'As for General Smith I am not surprised at the account you give of the absurdity of his orders; he is both a fool and a madman. I think that no time ought to be lost in removing him from your staff.' Duke of York to Pelham, Jan. 9, 1797: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 103).

state. I never was better.’¹ As it happened they were immediately directed to return to Cork and thence proceed to Bandon, in consequence of a number of French ships reappearing off Bantry Bay. ‘I believe they have returned in distress rather than with any view of landing,’ was his opinion. ‘The number is only eight, and I think it highly probable that Ld. Bridport may arrive before any more French ships can regain the bay. Their force on board is too insignificant to encourage them to attempt anything.’²

When he reached Bandon he discovered that the ships had sailed further out and rode at anchor off Bear Island in the mouth of the bay. ‘It appears from their moving further down that they think more of moving off than landing any troops, and it is to be hoped that the weather, the short days and the bad seamanship of the enemy may render any considerable open blaze of their fleet within the time that their provisions can hold out rather improbable.’³ He rode over from Bandon to Bantry (‘28 miles from hence’), and arrived just in time to see the last two French ships prepare to sail away. ‘At nightfall their sails were unbent, and in the morning they were gone.’ He thought the country ‘very well worth seeing and the bay itself the most magnificent in the world,’ and he was much impressed with the loyalty displayed by the inhabitants.⁴ In Bandon he had great difficulty in obtaining billets for his men, and was compelled to quarter half of them in the parish church. ‘The scene in the Church the night they came in was truly ludicrous,’ he observed. ‘It had so odd an effect to see all the pews filled with red coats, eating bread and cheese, and a large quantity heaped on the Communion table. When the men first turned in they had not a dry stitch on, the bread and cheese and straw had not appeared, there was but a single candle in the whole Church. When lodged in the pews your friend the Huntsman suddenly appeared in the pulpit with his bugle horn and made the Church ring with his music. The ridicule of it made the soldiers forget their wet clothes and the cold Church.’⁵

A few days later Castlereagh made another excursion to see

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Dec. 31 : Londonderry MSS.

² *Id.* Jan. 2, 1797.

³ *Id.* Jan. 4.

⁴ *Id.* Jan. 6.

⁵ *Id.* Jan. 4 : Londonderry, *op. cit.* 14.

the French frigate *Tartare*, which had been captured with six hundred and twenty-five men on board after a short action by Admiral Lord Bridport and brought into Cove harbour.¹ He had confessed himself 'curious to see what sort of stuff the French soldiers are made of,' and was in fact interested most in the prize.² Emily received the following account of his visit.

'BANDON, *Wednesday 11th*.

'I returned last night from my excursion to Cove—it was very well worth visiting. The harbour is the most magnificent in the world, Westmoreland Fort on Spike Island for an Irish fortification very respectable—in short it would make the most delightful summer quarters in the Kingdom. I passed a great deal of my day with the French officers and prisoners; the troops taken on board the *Tarter* are not large men, but all serviceable warmly clothed and enured to fatigue. I send you two assignats; the small one I picked up on the frigate's deck where it had with many others been trampled under foot. A sailor observing me lift it said: 'Please your honour, I will bring you a clean one from the cabin.' They had brought a quantity with them, I conclude, with the intention of circulating them in Ireland. The assignat of 1,000 livres would have produced about 35 louis in gold when I was last in France; at present, according to the information of the prisoners, *il ne vaut pas un seul sou*. . . .'

Two days later he wrote:

'BANDON, *13th Jan*.

'... Yesterday another large ship was brought into Kingsale by the *Druid*—full of dismounted cavalry—Gen'l Hoche's carriage with a quantity of stores and artillery were on board. I should recommend his Ex'cy to substitute it in the room of his State Coach, whose rottenness rather indicates an instability in Gov't. It will be a more popular and triumphant car in the eyes of the Dublin blackguards, if any of that class remains in the most loyal of cities. . . .'

Parliament had been summoned to meet on January 16; but, as it was uncertain whether the military members were to remain with their regiments, he begged Emily to be patient till he had received an official communication from the Lord-Lieutenant on this subject. In the meantime she might visit his quarters in Bandon, 'if you do not dislike a long journey and a poor lodging.'

¹ T. Crofton Croker, *Popular Songs Illustrative of the French Invasion of Ireland*, Part III, 11. According to the list of ships given by Bradley (*op. cit.* 32), this frigate was also called the *Tortue*.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Jan. 7: Londonderry MSS.

However, Emily was spared 'the monkish society' at Bandon, for the troops, who had for some time 'been lying upon straw in the Churches,' were very soon ordered back to their more comfortable winter quarters in Limerick, and their Lieutenant-Colonel was in consequence enabled to set out for Dublin.¹ 'A letter from Lord Camden and an order announcing the speedy march of the troops to their respective quarters has removed all my scruples,' he wrote to her on the 15th, 'and I shall set out tomorrow to join you. God knows, I never undertook a more grateful journey. . . . You may imagine I shall waste no time on the road.' In spite of the last sentence there is a story that when he arrived with his men at the North Bridge of Cork he was unable through forgetfulness or some other cause to give the correct password when challenged by the sentry. Anxious to enter the town since it was raining hard, he assured the sentry 'that he was Lord Castlereagh—that the body he commanded was the Derry Militia—and that he might safely let him pass.' The sentry, who was a volunteer yeoman and imbued with a profound sense of his responsibilities, declared that his orders were not to allow *any person* to pass without the proper word, and that if his lordship attempted to advance he would certainly fire on him. 'You are right, sir,' replied Castlereagh. 'I am glad to see such discipline among the volunteers.' He thereupon retired out of range of the sentry post, and awaited the return of the orderly whom he had despatched to the Bandon Guard for the password.²

6

Parliament had not been sitting for much more than a week when Castlereagh reached College Green again. The session opened uneasily with Grattan in his most vituperative mood railing the government soundly on the state of the country, and Sir John Blaquiere adding to official embarrassments by reviving his old project of an absentee tax. Mindful of the events in which he had lately played a part both in the north-east and south-west, Castlereagh lost no time in giving notice to the House of Commons

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Jan. 12, 15 : Londonderry MSS.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, Sept. 24, 1822. This incident was related by the sentry, Charles McCarthy of the Royal Cork Volunteer Yeoman Regiment.

of his intention to introduce a motion to augment the strength of the militia and so improve the national defences.¹ His scheme, which he outlined early in February, was first to obviate the need of a general ballot and pecuniary assessment of districts by providing for re-enlistment on bounty for a further period of twelve months (the initial period of enlistment had been four years). At the same time individual companies would be numerically increased, and substantial provision made for the families of those on active service.² He concluded his speech on this occasion by paying a handsome tribute to the militia regiments as a whole, for in spite of the many crimes laid to their charge (some of which were undoubtedly proven), they were generally acknowledged as the saviours of the country.

‘When the nature of their service was considered, it would appear a species of duty most trying to their feelings being chiefly employed against their misguided and lawless countrymen; yet their alacrity and loyalty were as conspicuously manifested on such unpleasant occasions, as their ardour and bravery were gloriously displayed on their march to meet the invading enemy.’

Castlereagh’s motion was carried unanimously and his scheme adopted forthwith. Irish parliamentary zeal for national defence never needed much encouragement; and it was therefore scarcely surprising that late in the session some members of the Opposition headed by Sir Lawrence Parsons should have expressed considerable indignation when the Chief Secretary and Castlereagh turned down a proposal to raise an additional force of 50,000 yeomanry.³ In the debate on the absentee tax Castlereagh among others opposed the proposition on the ground that, in going to establish a different law of property in Ireland from that in England, it would ultimately lead to a separation of the two countries, and it was rejected by a large majority. As the son of a resident landlord he was able to observe with glowing pride that absentees, if the object were to punish them, were already punished ‘by being deprived of those gratifications which must arise from seeing a happy tenantry flourishing under their care.’ He also pointed out with obvious satisfaction that no instance in modern times could be found of such a measure as this, except

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xvii. 289 (Jan. 28).

² *Parl. Reg.* xvii. 293-296 (Feb. 3).

³ *Parl. Reg.* xvii. 338.

in the history of Poland, 'and an Irish legislature would not be apt to recur to that country for a model to imitate.'¹

The state of the country, particularly in the north, might well call for criticism. Innumerable small societies of United Irishmen were creating organised disturbances and spreading revolutionary propaganda; illegal drilling was being conducted under cover of night, pikes were being hammered out in almost every blacksmith's forge; farmers were being intimidated by the foulest means from enlisting in the yeomanry; militiamen were being seduced; and the mass of the people was confidently expecting a French invasion as the signal for a general rising. There had lately been a violent recrudescence of the old agrarian troubles of Whiteboyism, which in turn led to renewed outbursts of plundering and other forms of crime on a large scale. In spite of the sudden rise of the Orange movement, which was at the outset purely a defensive organisation, it is one of the strangest features in Irish history that the system which reduced law and administration to a condition of temporary paralysis in the north and made the most active preparations to welcome a foreign invasion should have been at first exclusively conducted by Protestants, who now actually sought the support of the Catholics in the south and west for their objects. 'The Presbyterian ministers are unquestionably the great encouragers and promoters of sedition,' declared Downshire with evident truth, 'though as yet they have had cunning enough to keep their necks out of the halter. I think it hard that these rascals should enjoy the King's bounty to enable them to distress and destroy his government.'²

The amazing change of feeling which had taken place on the part of the Ulster Protestants was well illustrated in a letter from the United Irishman Arthur O'Connor which fell into the hands of the Castle officials at this time.³ It was written from Belfast to Charles James Fox. An extract follows:

'You cannot well conceive the situation of this people. You know how long our religious dissensions have made us the prey of the most

¹ *Par. Reg.* xvii. 397-8 (Feb. 28).

² Downshire to Cooke, Nov. 7, 1796: Dublin Castle MSS. See below, pp. 380 *et seq.*

³ This letter was subsequently used to identify O'Connor's handwriting at his trial for high treason at Maidstone. Cooke to Wickham, March 30, 1798; Dublin Castle MSS.

contemptible factions amongst ourselves, to say nothing of the dependence we suffered under Great Britain. The people of the north tho' perhaps the best educated peasantry in Europe were violently against any connexion with the papists, and the Linen Manufacture has always been esteemed as a peace offering to the northerns for the injustice our trade and manufactures have suffered to aggrandise England. This was the state of things before the war, but now it has undergone a total change. The Presbyterians of the north have sought with uncommon zeal an union with the Catholics and Protestants. They have instituted societies which have spread rapidly throughout the whole island. They bind themselves by a voluntary oath to promote brotherly love and affection amongst Irishmen of every religious persuasion, to promote a reform, and never to disclose anything that passes in the society.' ¹

It was with a view to checking the fruits of this 'brotherly love and affection,' as reflected in the reports of murder, arson, houghing and outrage which daily reached the Castle, that the hitherto leniently disposed Camden was compelled to adopt more coercive measures.

Castlereagh, as we have seen, had already succeeded in persuading Parliament to increase the strength of the militia. At the beginning of March Pelham, acting on the instructions of the Lord-Lieutenant and Privy Council, directed General Lake to restore order in Ulster by disarming all persons who did not bear His Majesty's commission, dispersing all tumultuous and unlawful assemblies, and taking such other measures as he thought necessary for the preservation of peace.² The effect of this communication was to invest General Lake with all the powers of martial law. Accordingly on March 13 Lake issued a Proclamation at Belfast ordering all persons in that district who were not peace officers or soldiers to bring in their arms. Patrols were to take up all unauthorised persons after ten o'clock at night, and such delinquents against this curfew regulation as could not pay the stated fine of five shillings were to be brought to a drumhead court-martial and receive one hundred lashes apiece.³ 'Belfast ought to be punished most severely,' he wrote to Pelham shortly afterwards, 'as it is plain every act of sedition originates in this town. 'I have patrols going all night and will do everything I

¹ A. O'Connor to C. J. Fox, Dec. 24, 1796 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² Pelham to Lake, March 3 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 103).

³ Joy, *Historical Collections*, 461-2, 490.

can to rid the country of these rebellious scoundrels by sending them on board the tender.' ¹

It should be noted that the law courts were still open, and in theory at least martial law had not been proclaimed. It would perhaps have been more satisfactory if the latter course had been taken, for Lake's proclamation was clearly illegal and could only be justified on the ground of political expediency. It was unfortunate also that there was no adequate English force at hand. The few regular troops were fully occupied in defending the country against possible hostile invasion, so that the task of disarming the north was largely entrusted to the militia and yeomanry, who were in many cases imperfectly disciplined and used their authority to gratify private desires for vengeance. Pelham strongly urged that no searches for arms should be conducted without the supervision of a superior officer, but Lake explained that this was quite impossible; he did, however, promise to do what he could to check abuses.² If gentler methods might have been employed to disarm a rebellious province, it is to the credit of Lake that Ulster was reduced to a condition of complete subordination within a few months. The whole of County Down had been 'proclaimed' under the Insurrection Act on March 1, and Castlereagh, who returned to the north shortly afterwards, apparently gave a lead to the other magistrates in the execution of the law. 'Castlereagh doubles his diligence,' wrote Drennan's sister that month from Belfast, 'and men crowd the tender.'³

In a letter to the Chief Secretary, Castlereagh described the local situation as it was a few weeks after Lake's manifesto.

'MT. STEWART, 7 April, 1797.

'... At first the banditti were actively employed every night in taking arms, but since the sweep made by Gen'l Lake, a few transmissions to the tender, and some apprehension of a still more severe rebuke if the violence was persisted in, matters have subsided at least in this neighbourhood.

'The Proclamation has certainly had a powerful effect in tranquilizing, tho' not perhaps altering the disposition of the people. It seldom happens that we find an individual abroad after the prescribed hour, and except those who have fled few absent themselves from their

¹ Lake to Pelham, April 16: Pelham MSS.

² Lecky, iv. 37.

³ McTier to Drennan, March: *Drennan Letters*, 658.

houses. Many have left the country. 15 of my father's labourers withdrew immediately after I reached this, and have ever since eluded my search. Their absence has materially contributed to our quiet.

'Notwithstanding the impression evidently produced by the system which has been adopted upon the mass of the people yet the leaders of the disaffected party do not seem at all dispirited, which arises, I conclude, from expectations they have of another effort being made in their favour on the part of the enemy. They can have little hopes of succeeding from their own strength, and must have considerable fears of legal punishment, yet they contrive insolent and impudently and openly threaten those who have either withdrawn from or do not join their party. Their great effort will be directed to deter the jurors summoned to the assizes from attending, in which I am apprehensive they will be but too successful, as many will prefer paying a fine rather than serving. . . .'¹

7

The cause lists at the Ulster spring assizes were heavy. Castle-reagh himself attended both Antrim and Down County Courts, and at each his character was assailed in dramatic circumstances.

Among the members of the Assassination Committee of the United Irishmen, who, it will be remembered, were arrested by Carhampton and Castlereagh some months previously in Belfast, was a young man called Joseph Cuthbert, a tailor by trade.² He was indicted at the Antrim Assizes on a charge of conspiracy to murder one Lee, who had in fact been attacked, but had escaped with a slight gunshot wound. The plot had been formed and the attempt made to carry it into execution on the premises of a Belfast tavern situated in Sugar House Entry, and known as Peggy Barclay's.³ The Crown had obtained its evidence for this case from the barmaid, a certain Bell Martin, who was bound on her own recognisances to prosecute. This lady was also a notorious prostitute. She came of a poor family in Portaferry, and had grown up in the possession of a handsome face and a fine figure. Though befriended by the local Presbyterian minister she had early shown signs of kleptomania, for which reason her better-to-do neighbours at whose houses she was in the habit of calling

¹ Castlereagh to Pelham, April 7 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² See above, p. 166.

³ *Northern Star*, April 21. S. McSkimmin, *Annals of Ulster* (ed. McCrum), 50.

seldom admitted her beyond the hall. These unwelcome receptions may have induced her to remove to Belfast ; at any rate she soon took up her residence there and proceeded to put her charms to the most profitable use. She further augmented her income by becoming barmaid at Peggy Barclay's Tavern. In this tavern were in the habit of meeting the Assassination Committee and several United Irish societies, including the Muddlers' Club, whose moving spirits were Henry Joy McCracken and James Hope. Bell Martin was not unnaturally in a position to render service to government by giving information about these bodies, which she did, though not (in her own words) ' with any view of reward but for the good of the community.'¹ In consequence of one of these communications to authority the Muddlers' Club had lately been broken up.²

The prosecutor's reputation being generally known, when she arrived at Carrickfergus where the Antrim Assizes were held, a number of reputable gentlemen in County Down were called by the prisoner as witnesses of her character—these included Londonderry, Castlereagh, Cleland, and Steele Dickson, the Presbyterian minister in Portaferry. Castlereagh was present at the opening of the assizes, but caught a severe cold which prevented him from attending on any subsequent days.³ When the prisoner was arraigned, Bell Martin, though she was supposed to be under confinement, could not be found. The case against Cuthbert was therefore dismissed for lack of evidence, but no sooner had the prisoner been discharged than he was immediately rearrested on a warrant of high treason signed by the Lord Chief Justice and was remanded in custody. This strange procedure called forth a comment from prisoner's counsel that it looked as if the Crown knew that Cuthbert would be acquitted, since it had provided itself with this new authority for depriving him of his liberty.⁴

The rumour was now widely circulated by Castlereagh's enemies that he had previously seduced Bell Martin, and then by alternate threats and bribes had prevailed upon her to appear at Carrickfergus and prosecute Cuthbert, whose conviction he

¹ Information of Bella Martin, June 23, 1798 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² Madden, ii. 396-9 ; McSkimmin, *loc. cit.*

³ *Northern Star*, April 24.

⁴ *Northern Star*, April 21.

desired in order to gratify a private grudge. It was also said that Bell Martin had been allowed to escape by the authorities on the eve of the trial as it was feared that her presence in court might lead to embarrassing revelations about his character ; and Mrs. McTier informed her brother, Dr. Drennan, that Castlereagh's absence on this occasion was not due to a cold, but that ' it is supposed to proceed from a Curran nausea.'¹ Now the suggestion that Castlereagh could possibly have had any connection with Bell Martin apart from an official one is so entirely out of keeping with the high standard of morality that he was known to preserve in his private life, that it might well be dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration. However, a careful examination of every authority and every conceivable source of information bearing on this subject leaves no doubt that there is not a shadow of truth in this allegation against Castlereagh. If the Crown solicitor did excuse Bell Martin's recognisances and let her go, it was due to a fear that her evidence, though true, might too easily be discredited before the jury by the defence on account of her bad moral character. The extent of Cuthbert's guilt may be gathered from the fact that on being visited in gaol by a friend on the evening of his re-arrest the prisoner admitted that his alibi (several witnesses had sworn that he was drinking with them at the time of the shooting) ' was merely a judicious scheme on the part of his attorney, for by G—— he was the very man who winged Lee ! ' ² As for Bell Martin, she shortly afterwards re-appeared in Dublin, where it seems that the government again sought her assistance. Dr. Drennan, for instance, was informed that ' in a boxing match with her landlady ' she ' let a letter fall which was read and found to be an information sworn or to be sworn against Curran, Sampson and some others.'³ Later in the same year the following entry appears in the Secret Service Money Book kept by Under-Secretary Cooke at the Castle :

' Nov. 3, 1797. Paid to Bell Martin for taking her out of town, etc., £5 13s. 9d.'⁴

And out of town she may with propriety be left.

¹ McTier to Drennan [April 23] ; Drennan Letters, 658a (unpublished) ; cp. the political squib book, *County Down Election*, 1805, *passim*.

² McSkimmin, *loc. cit.* 50.

³ Drennan to McTier, June : Drennan Letters, 667 (unpublished).

⁴ Secret Service Money Book MS. : Royal Irish Academy.

The Down Assizes came on immediately afterwards, and Castlereagh, who had recovered his health sufficiently to attend the court, served on the Grand Jury. This assize also did not pass without incident. Castlereagh was bitterly attacked in open court by Curran for committing a suspected rebel who refused to answer another magistrate's interrogatories.¹ A large number of the local magistrates refused to commit any United Irishman, and were reported to have taken an oath through fear binding themselves not to do so. At the same time Castlereagh also discovered that the county gaoler was a United man, though it was likewise stated that he took the oath 'through fear.'² The extreme difficulty of obtaining individuals to serve upon common juries, their lives being frequently endangered if they did so, afforded Curran a further opportunity of displaying his powers of invective. When the jury panel was called over, the array was challenged on the ground of the Sheriff's partial conduct. It was alleged that the Sheriff and his friends, including Castlereagh and Cleland, had packed the jury. Cleland in particular was accused of having obtained a number of blank summonses, upon which he inscribed the names of suitable jurymen, who accordingly appeared on the panel.

Curran stated his case plainly :

'He receives blank summonses, fills what he deems convenient, etc. Gracious God, what are the courts of justice? What is trial by jury? What is the country brought to? Were it told in the courts above, were it told in the other countries, were it told in Westminster Hall that such a man was permitted to return near one half of the grand panel of the county from one particular district—a district under severe distress, a district to which he is agent and one over which, with the authority he possesses, he is able to bring great calamity, would it be believed.'

The barrister's picture of Cleland was no less flattering :

'He ascends the pulpit with the gospel of benignity and peace, he endeavours to impress himself and his hearers with its meek and holy spirit. He descends, throws off the purple, seizes the Insurrection Act in one hand and the whip in the other, flies by night and day after his game,—and, with his heart panting, his breath exhausted and his

¹ T. Lane to Downshire, May 1 : Downshire MSS. *Northern Star*, April 28.

² Lake to Pelham, June 8 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 103).

belly at the ground in the chase, he turns round and tells you that his mind is unprejudiced, that his heart is full of humanity and that all his hopes, fears and wishes are a pure and innocent mixture of milk and water.' ¹

Cleland stated in cross-examination that, from the nature of the employment and his intercourse with the tenantry of the several extensive estates whose agent he was, he had learned how many people were afraid to come forward and serve as jurors lest they should be injured in their persons or property. At the Sheriff's request therefore he submitted a list of names of individuals whom he considered would act in this respect, and a number of these were arrayed on the panel. Competent triers were now appointed to examine the challenge, and in spite of Curran's outburst they sustained the original panel. In one of the political cases which followed more than half the jurymen came from Newtownards, and it was doubtless a matter of some surprise to Curran that they brought in a verdict of not guilty.²

8

As soon as the business of the assizes was finished Castlereagh went back to Dublin for the few remaining weeks of Parliament. Before he left Mount Stewart Cleland promised to keep him posted with the latest information on the subject of local United Irish activities. On his arrival at College Green he found that he was amongst the fifteen members who had lately been selected by ballot to constitute a secret committee of the House of Commons for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon evidence of treasonable conspiracies.³ It was to this body that he passed on the valuable information which he received from Cleland. On the last active day of the session (May 15) Castlereagh was chosen to move an address of loyalty in the Commons, and his speech produced an exciting discussion, in the course of which one member's suggestion that Government meant to 'coerce the whole country' caused the galleries to be cleared.⁴ Later in the same

¹ *Northern Star*, May 5. ² *Northern Star*, April 28 ; May 1, 5.

³ *Parl. Reg.* xvii., 490. The other members of the Committee included the Speaker, the Chief Secretary, the Law Officers and Beresford.

⁴ *Parl. Reg.* xvii. 527-9.

evening a debate on parliamentary reform took place, and at its conclusion Grattan made the startling announcement that he and his supporters intended to follow the example of Fox in England 'and trouble you no more.'¹ Grattan, Ponsonby, Curran and a few others thereupon seceded from Parliament, and were not seen again at College Green till the debates on the Union rallied them (in their view) to the defence of national liberty and independence. Henceforth, too, public interest in parliamentary proceedings was noticeably to flag, and the invaluable published reports of debates which had lately been much compressed now ceased altogether.² Such a development was not calculated to increase Castlereagh's respect for the efficacy of parliamentary rule.

Soon after this a proclamation was issued by the Lord-Lieutenant and the Privy Council, which stated that a seditious conspiracy notoriously existed and that a rebel army was being organised in order to subvert the Constitution. The country was therefore placed more strictly under martial law, but at the same time a free pardon was offered to all persons who had joined the conspiracy and had not been guilty of certain enumerated crimes, provided that within a given period they first surrendered themselves to a local magistrate and took the oath of allegiance.³ Notwithstanding this so-called 'measure of mercy and warning to the disaffected,' the United Irish provincial committee in Ulster persisted in their plans for a general rising throughout the north, which was to take place towards the end of June. But the rising was still-born, for the rebel plans were divulged to Cleland by an informer and transmitted to Dublin in time for additional troops to be rushed to the scene of operations.⁴ The local United

¹ *Parl. Reg.* xvii. 527-9; Grattan, *Speeches*, iii. 343.

² Lecky, iv. 73. The reports of debates in the last Irish Parliament are most vague and fragmentary, and must be chiefly sought for in contemporary journals and pamphlets.

³ Seward, *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 196-9. The proclamation was dated May 17, and the latest date for taking the oath of allegiance was June 25. By a subsequent proclamation of June 22 a further month's grace was permitted.

⁴ Cleland to Castlereagh, May 16: Dublin Castle MSS. The informer was Nicholas Magean of Saintfield, and the substance of his information, which extended from April 1797 to June 1798, and which in Castlereagh's words 'brought home guilt to every leader in Ulster' (Castlereagh to Wickham, June 22, 1798: H.O. Ireland, 76), will be found in the *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons*,

Irish forces were easily dispersed by Lake and Nugent, and their principals arrested. The latter included that well-known Presbyterian minister, the Rev. William Steele Dickson, who turned out to be a general in the rebel army. Nugent reported that the effect of this check was that 'the country people are bringing in their arms very fast and are taking the oath of allegiance.'¹ About the same time the *Northern Star*, the pernicious rebel journal which Lake had recently begged leave to burn, was completely suppressed after some soldiers of the Monaghan Militia stationed in Belfast had broken up the printing presses and thrown the type into the street.²

At the end of May the Derry Militia, which had lately been recruiting in its home county, returned to Limerick. Castlereagh immediately joined it, for he wished to investigate a rumour which had reached his ears that some of its rank and file had been seduced from their allegiance by United Irish agents. He also desired to supervise the regiment's emigration to summer quarters. 'We are just returned from firing for his Majesty's birthday,' he wrote to Emily on June 5, two days after his arrival. 'It is broiling hot. . . . I trust the post of to-morrow will ascertain the day of our departure. The news in the last packet is dismal ; pray find out something comfortable for me, as I shall never grow fat on meeting and treason. The Marquis³ is here in his most magnificent attitude. He made a grand speech to his men on his arrival, telling them he had received the King's thanks for their being the first Reg't in the service to resolve agst seduction etc.' The rumour that the United Irish had made a number of con-

August 21, 1798, Appendix XIV. Cleland's association with Mageau was the subject of much malicious gossip, e.g. James Hope in his *Autobiography* says that they had a meeting to assassinate Downshire, 'but the Marquis escaped by taking a different way home from that by which he was expected to pass.' (Madden, *United Irishmen*, 3rd series, i. 248, 1st ed.) The suggestion that a well-known magistrate and clergyman should conspire with an informer to murder the governor of the county with whom he was on perfectly friendly terms is little short of ludicrous. It is astonishing that Madden had the credulity to publish it.

¹ Lake to Pelham, June 24 : Nugent to Pelham, June 25 ; Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 104).

² On the history and fate of the *Northern Star* see an interesting article by the late F. J. Bigger in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* (1894), i. 33.

³ Lord Downshire, who commanded the Downshire Militia.

verts among the militia regiments stationed in the west proved but too well founded, and a regrettable example had to be made. Thirteen militiamen were tried before a general court-martial, and received sentences varying from five hundred up to fifteen hundred lashes apiece. The sentences were subsequently carried out before all the troops in the neighbourhood, 'and a dreadful business it was.' When the culprits had recovered from this punishment they were sent abroad to serve in his Majesty's forces for life,¹ and their fate had the effect of checking further defections. It had been decided that the Derry Militia should take up its old summer quarters in Dundalk as soon as possible, and hither the regiment accordingly marched off at four o'clock one June morning. The Lieutenant-Colonel was suffering from an attack of gout, and in consequence he did not accompany his men. Instead he cheerfully accepted the short confinement which this complaint forced upon him ('after the tumult of a winter's life it is rather a salutary visitor'²), and posted up to town in greater comfort. He stopped at Merrion Street to pick up Emily, and they both reached Dundalk a day before the men whose new quarters he had to prepare.³

Castlereagh had been in Dundalk barely a fortnight when his uncle was able to fulfil the expectations of official preferment which he had held out to him the previous year.⁴ The office of Keeper of the Signet had recently fallen vacant, and on the Lord-Lieutenant offering it to him he immediately accepted it. In submitting the appointment to Whitehall for the Home Secretary's approval Camden wrote: 'I trust your Grace will import to other motives than his connection with me the selection of him for this office. His ability and his assiduity in Parliament and his application to business out of it render it very desirable for His Majesty's service in Ireland to attach a man of that description to this country, and to induce him to attend to its interests and to the business of the different departments of it.'⁵ In due course the patent was issued; and Castlereagh found himself a

¹ General Coote to Pelham, June: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 104).

² Castlereagh to his wife, undated (but evidently June 17): Londonderry MSS.

³ *Id.* June 19-27.

⁴ See above, p. 144.

⁵ Camden to Portland, July 15: H.O. Ireland, 70.

member of the government, though in truth a subordinate member.¹

Nor was anything beyond occasional attendance required of him at the Castle. The office of Keeper of His Majesty's Signet or Privy Seal in Ireland had at one time been of considerable political importance by reason of its attachment to that of Principal Secretary of State, but in the year 1797 its administrative duties were purely formal. The Lord-Lieutenant, who properly speaking took the place of the King in Ireland, signed all fiants, warrants, commissions, etc., some on his own authority and some on the authority of a King's Letter from the English Secretary of State. These documents, countersigned by the Lord-Lieutenant's Chief Secretary and accompanied by a 'docket' setting out briefly the nature of the grant, were then sent to the Signet Office, where they received the official stamp of authority by the affixing of the Privy Seal. All issues from the Treasury, for example, were made upon warrants so sealed and then sent on to the Auditor-General, who made the necessary payments. If the fiants, etc., required the authority of the Great Seal, they were subsequently forwarded to the Crown Office in Chancery. The Lord Chancellor could not issue letters patent under the Great Seal until he had first received a fiant sealed with the Privy Seal. So far as its holder was concerned the office of Keeper of the Signet or Privy Seal was a sinecure, since its material duties were performed by the Clerks of the Signet Office. It carried with it a salary of £1,500 a year, and was usually bestowed by the Lord-Lieutenant upon an able parliamentary supporter whose services it was deemed advisable to attach more securely to Government.²

Throughout the summer of 1797 Castlereagh remained with his regiment in Dundalk, except for a few days when the general election brought him to the north. Downshire, who was absent from Ireland at this time and also heavily in debt, made no attempt to force a contest in County Down, and Castlereagh was in consequence returned unopposed.³ He was duly grateful to

¹ Patent dated July 24 : *Liber Munerorum Publicorum Hiberniae*, iii. 106.

² See the excellent paper read before the Royal Irish Academy on 'The Offices of Secretary of State for Ireland and Keeper of the Signet or Privy Seal' (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxviii. c. 4) by Mr. Herbert Wood.

³ Return dated July 29, 1797 : *Belfast News-Letter*, July 30.

his constituents. 'I trust you will never have reason to regret the confidence you have thus condescended to place in me,' he wrote in his election address.¹ At the same time he was obliged to vacate his seat for Orford in the English Parliament by reason of his acceptance of office in Ireland, and did not again sit at Westminster till the first meeting of the United Parliament four years later.

Castlereagh was not slow to realise that he had taken office at a critical moment. 'There never was a period when the character of the Irish administration was of more importance,' declared Pelham at this time. 'The honour and perhaps the existence of the present Parliament will depend upon the conduct of the administration, to whom they are supposed to be too much devoted. Much is to be done and much may be done, and if the country sees and feels that the government can be carried on without corruption the speculative views of the present day will be given up.'² Unfortunately the constitutional fabric was more rotten than the Chief Secretary imagined, and Castlereagh for one saw that it was no guarantee against armed rebellion.

¹ The address, which was printed in the newspapers, cost him £3 5s. od. Estate Office MSS. (Accounts Journal).

² Pelham to Portland, Aug. 1 : H.O. Ireland, 70.

CHAPTER VI

THE CASTLE

I

MEANWHILE the difficult process of disarming Ulster was being carried out with complete success. As early as June General Lake had written from Belfast: 'This town is more humbled than it has ever been and many of the villains have quitted it.'¹ In the first three weeks of July over 9,000 arms were surrendered voluntarily, while another 3,000 were seized by force.² It was impossible not to expect that some acts of violence should take place in these circumstances, particularly when the work of searching for arms was entrusted to small detachments of militiamen and yeomanry, who were often under what was at best the imperfect control of non-commissioned officers. Complaints were naturally very numerous, and it was not easy for the authorities to detect genuine cases of military oppression. 'The soldiers make no scruple of stripping men, tying them to a tree, and flogging them with bits and bridles,' wrote a correspondent of Charlemont's in County Antrim. 'This summary mode of punishing I do not like, even when it falls on fit objects. There is a danger too that these gentlemen in red may not exactly know where to stop; and being both judges and executioners a mistake of theirs will not be easily remedied.'³ Haliday used stronger language in County Down: 'Many are the military outrages which are committed in the north such as inflictions of military punishment on poor people no way subject to martial law—I myself witnessed one cruel instance of this at Newtownards. Burglaries, robberies, arsons, murders, and almost every instance passed over without censure or any satisfaction to the sufferers.'⁴ One regiment of

¹ Lake to Pelham, June 4, 1797: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 104).

² Returns of Arms: Dublin Castle MSS.

³ E. Hudson to Charlemont, June 5, 25: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 300-301.

⁴ Haliday to Charlemont, Oct. 6: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 306.

Welsh fencible cavalry called the Ancient Britons, which was stationed in south Down, undoubtedly permitted its zeal to lead it to commit excesses, and until reprimanded its members were inclined to act, as Camden nicely expressed it, 'with perhaps too much attachment to the sword exercise which they had recently learnt.'¹ Houses were burnt in districts where outrages on the troops had occurred, while the lash and picket were freely and successfully used for the purpose of extracting concealed arms from the inhabitants.

If stubborn resistance had to be overcome by stubborn methods, partisan report subsequently magnified the latter into heinous atrocities. As we have seen, it was impossible by reason of the disorganised state of the country to prevent every act of violence, and there were doubtless cases where innocent individuals suffered along with the guilty. But it should be borne in mind that men of the type of Pelham and Castlereagh resolutely set their faces against all forms of military licence. The authors of outrages when detected were punished both by courts-martial and the ordinary criminal courts, and individuals whose property suffered had recourse to the civil remedy of damages, which was awarded in a number of cases. Indeed, it is surprising that the military acted with the restraint which they did under frequent provocation, and if Pelham's judgment of their conduct is not quite accurate it is at least very near the truth. 'It cannot be denied that some things have been done which are to be regretted,' he wrote towards the end of the year. 'At the same time I believe no army ever behaved better, and I will venture to say that no army was ever placed in exactly the same situation.'²

The revived efficiency of the law courts was a sign of returning peace. When Castlereagh arrived from Dundalk to attend the autumn assizes at Downpatrick, the cause lists were heavier than in the spring, and there were a number of important political trials. He was accompanied for part of his journey by William Elliot, the recently-appointed Under-Secretary in the Military Department, whom he appears to have first met in connection with the militia, and with whom he was now beginning to form a close friendship. They reached Mount Stewart on a fine Sep-

¹ Camden to Portland, Nov. 3 : H.O. Ireland, 70.

² Pelham to Portland, Nov. 2 : H.O. Ireland, 70.

tember evening, and were pleased to find that 'Molly appeared everywhere tame,¹ and the country beautiful.' The next day, which was spent in 'walking Elliot over the place,' revealed the distressing fact in the stables that one of his most prized horses was very ill. 'I am sorry to say Prince is worse than ever,' he observed. 'Poor fellow! He cannot last long.'² On the third day he and Elliot paid a visit to General Lake in Belfast, so that the Under-Secretary, who was on his way to London, might be put in possession of the latest information regarding the military situation in Ulster. On the next day Elliot sailed from Donaghadee and Castlereagh proceeded to the county assizes.³

The prosecutions for treason were to be conducted by the Attorney-General, Arthur Wolfe, and Castlereagh had promised to supply him with some of the necessary evidence for the indictments at Downpatrick. Shortly before the opening of the assizes he could not find the relevant documents, so he wrote in frantic haste to Emily whom he had left behind in Dundalk: 'I am most excessively distressed in having forgot that shabby green pocket-book in which were the treasonable papers. I thought I had put it in my writing case. I must have left it either in the black deal box, the key of which Quin carries with him, or on the harpsichord where I was employed the night before I set out in separating my papers. Dearest Emily, look everywhere for it and send it to me by Quin sealed up. I shall be ruined if I don't recover it.'⁴ It appears that the papers were discovered and despatched in time, for he does not mention the subject again in his letters. The commission opened in due course with Castlereagh sitting beside the foreman on the Grand Jury. On the first day 'two men were found guilty of robbing a house of arms,' and on the second 'two men who swore the Clerk of the Peace in his own garden pleaded guilty as did one Smith who had sworn a soldier—all capital offences but these confessions shorten it.'⁵ By the end of the fifth day Castlereagh informed his wife that 'seven have been

¹ When anyone was assassinated by a United Irish agent it was commonly said of the victim 'that Molly had him' or 'that Molly had eaten him': Madden, i. 534 (2nd ed.).

² Castlereagh to his wife [Sept. 19]: Londonderry MSS.

³ *Belfast News-Letter*, Sept. 22.

⁴ Castlereagh to his wife [Sept. 21]: Londonderry MSS.

⁵ Castlereagh to his wife [Sept. 21]: Londonderry MSS.

capitally convicted, others transported,' and that he hoped to get away in a day or two. 'I am just come from dining with the Judges,' he continued. 'They are both so much in love with you that they have agreed, in order to avoid pulling wigs, to have you as a toast week about. You belong to Lord Yelverton at present. I hope *my week* will come next.'¹

Despite the fairness of the Attorney-General and the humanity of the judges, it was indeed, as Haliday remarked, 'the close of a tedious and sanguinary north-west circuit.'² One of the judges actually had to perform, in Wolfe's words, 'the awful and most unexampled duty of pronouncing the sentence of death on twenty men together.'³ The Lord-Lieutenant, however, could not profess himself dissatisfied with the result. 'Between forty and fifty capital convictions have taken place,' he wrote to Whitehall, 'and most of them have been for those crimes connected with the conspiracy, which had so formidably spread itself in that part of the Kingdom. Several of these unfortunate persons have been executed, but the lenity of the judges has prompted them to recommend it to me to respite the sentence against some of them and to keep them as hostages for the good behaviour of the neighbourhood in which these crimes were committed. Both the judges I have mentioned [Lord Yelverton and Mr. Justice Chamberlain] have declared to me that they are not dissatisfied with a single verdict. . . .'⁴

The Antrim Assizes, which were held immediately before those in Down, provided Irish martyrology with one of its most conspicuous figures. The case of William Orr merits a brief description, if only by reason of the part which Castlereagh was afterwards falsely alleged to have played in it. Orr, a young and popular Presbyterian farmer, was found guilty under the Insurrection Act of the capital offence of administering unlawful oaths to two soldiers. This case, which was the first of its kind to be tried under the Act, naturally aroused considerable interest. Before sentence was pronounced, Curran on behalf of the prisoner submitted several extraordinary affidavits to the Court. One of

¹ Castlereagh to his wife [Sept. 27]: Londonderry MSS.

² Haliday to Charlemont, Oct. 6: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 306.

³ Cited Lecky, iv. 103.

⁴ Camden to Portland, Oct. 6: H.O. Ireland, 72.

these, sworn by two jurymen, was to the effect that when the jury retired two very strong bottles of whisky were passed into them through the juryroom window, as a result of which several of its members became completely intoxicated. Another, also sworn by a jurymen, stated that the deponent had been intimidated and induced to concur in a verdict contrary to his real opinion. The judges, who acted in strict accordance with the law, held that these affidavits which were submitted after verdict given could not alter the sentence, and Orr was accordingly condemned to death. Yelverton, who presided on the bench, felt that he could not honestly support the jury's recommendation to mercy, though he transmitted it to Dublin. Frantic efforts were now made to save the condemned man's life by soliciting official influence for a reprieve, and even by bribing his gaoler to let him escape. Lady Londonderry was among those who exerted themselves in his aid. 'Our dear countess has done all that it was possible for her to do,' Haliday told Charlemont on the eve of Orr's execution, 'but as it appears at present with as little success as the rest.'¹

After careful enquiry and consultation with the judges, the Lord-Lieutenant decided that he was unable to exercise his prerogative of mercy, and Orr was accordingly hanged at Carrickfergus. After the body had been cut down Orr's friends vainly tried to restore him to life by transfusing calf's blood into his veins; pieces of his clothing were then distributed throughout the Kingdom, where they were preserved as relics, and his example became the inspiration of a host of Irish nationalist leaders from Drennan, Sheares, McCracken and Emmet down to our own day.² Since most of Castlereagh's enemies were of the kind which regarded Orr's death as a judicial murder, it is scarcely surprising that one of them should have gone so far as to assert a number of years after the event that 'the noble lord was one of the council which decided upon the execution of Orr.'³ Castlereagh was, of course, not in Dublin at the time the Lord-Lieutenant was considering the case, but had returned to his regiment in Dundalk, nor was he then a member of the Privy Council. How widely this falsehood was believed when it was first uttered it is difficult

¹ Haliday to Charlemont, Oct. 6: *Charl. Corr.* ii. 306.

² Lecky, iv. 103-16.

³ *The Case of Peter Finnerty*, xvii. (London, 1811). See below, p. 423, note 2.

to say ; it is unfortunately one of the many which still cling to the name of Castlereagh in Ireland.

Towards the middle of October the new Keeper of the Signet was summoned to town by the Lord-Lieutenant. Great difficulty had recently been experienced in procuring the attendance of a sufficient number of Lords of the Treasury when the business of the Board demanded their meeting, and Camden therefore attached his nephew's name to the commission without salary.¹ A further distinction awaited Castlereagh. He was invited to attend a meeting of the Privy Council in the Castle. Some days later he did so, and in the presence of the Lord-Lieutenant and a full board he was sworn a member of that body.² First the oath of a Councillor of State was administered. Then followed the oaths of allegiance and abjuration and the declaration against transubstantiation. As a Privy Councillor of Ireland he promised 'to be true and faithful to our Sovereign Lord King George the Third and his Council, to conceal and keep secret from time to time, and for the better furtherance of His Majesty's service to give my best advice and counsel, and in all things concerning His Majesty's honour and profit to use with diligence and circumspection as to a true councillor shall appertain, and that I shall by no means consent to his disherison or hindrance but shall make declaration thereof to the Lord-Lieutenant or other chief governor or governors of Ireland for the time being . . . or otherwise to such of His Majesty's Council as are next to me, as well as that as all other matters that may touch His Majesty's servants or be prejudicial in any condition to his person or to the person of his Lord-Lieutenant . . . so help me God and Christ Jesus.'³

Before he left again for Dundalk Castlereagh saw the Chief Secretary, who had been absent in England for some months. 'Pelham is returned in but indifferent health,' he reported. 'I am afraid his *séjour* at the Park *will not restore him*.'⁴ Camden

¹ October 14 : *Liber Munerorum Publicorum Hiberniae*, iii. 76.

² October 20 : Dublin Castle MSS. (Irish Privy Council Roll). See below, Appendix II, pp. 449-52.

³ Dublin Castle MSS. (Oath of a Councillor of State).

⁴ Castlereagh to his wife [Oct.] : Londonderry MSS.

had recently observed to Pelham that a Chief Secretary who resided more constantly in the country would be of greater advantage to the public service, and had again suggested Castlereagh as his most suitable successor in office.¹ To that observation the meritorious Pelham had replied that he would endeavour to carry on his official duties, and doubtless finding it difficult to do this in Sussex he was again in Dublin. They conversed chiefly on military matters. 'Does not the decree of the Directory look like a trick to get Buonaparte out of Italy? It will be curious to observe whether he is caught.' Castlereagh, whose opinions were now coming to have considerable weight with the elder man, submitted an ingenious scheme 'to unite the British and Irish artillery, to have one corps common to the Empire, and to make Woolwich the seminary for educating the officers.' He was actuated to this by the feeling that the Irish artillery, which consisted mostly of Presbyterians recruited in the neighbourhood of Belfast, was at present 'defective in discipline and not altogether to be relied on in a contest to which the disaffected have been but too successful in giving a national complexion.'² He was also fully alive to the military weakness of the Kingdom, so that when Pelham went back to England at the end of the year he strongly urged him to use his influence with the Duke of York to obtain the despatch of an additional force of regular troops. 'I shall be much astonished considering the avowed purpose of Carnot's plan against this country,' he confessed, 'if the English Government does not lay its shoulders to the defence of Ireland.'³

Though still nominally in quarters with his regiment in Dundalk, Castlereagh was now compelled to make frequent excursions to town, where his presence at the Treasury was needed. (Nor could he escape attendance at the autumn meeting of the Down Hunt without violating his father's wishes, but, as he expected, 'two or three days of that *august assembly*' fully satisfied his 'duties and inclination.'⁴) In these circumstances it was necessary for him to have an independent establishment in Dublin, so

¹ Camden to Pelham, Aug. : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 105).

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 10 : Pelham MSS.

³ Castlereagh to Pelham [Dec.] : Dublin Castle MSS. (Departmental Correspondence).

⁴ Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 10 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 105).

he proceeded to take over from Conolly the house in Merrion Street where he and Emily had been in the habit of staying during their visits to the capital. Considering its recent construction in the most fashionable neighbourhood, its novel interior decoration and its handsome furnishings, he secured a bargain at the yearly rent of £239 10s. The house possessed, in addition, one unusual though useful feature—it was connected with the mews at the back by an underground passage below the garden level.¹ The frequent meetings of the Treasury Board were caused by the increasing embarrassment of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Expenditure for the current quarter in December exceeded revenue by well over half a million sterling. Furthermore, the army had to be paid, as well as the lottery prizes distributed, and the Irish Exchequer was almost empty. Sir John Parnell, the Chancellor, was for making up the deficit by public loan. The Lord-Lieutenant preferred to rely on the Bank of Ireland for accommodation. Castlereagh was uncertain which was the better course to adopt. He made out an official statement of the national wants and means which was despatched to Pelham in England, and the matter was left to the Chief Secretary's discretion.² 'The great object,' he wisely observed, 'seems to be to get as much money as possible in a short time.'³ Eventually the English Government had to come to the rescue with a loan of £1,500,000 in order to avert a military mutiny and a riot of unpaid lottery prize winners.⁴ The remaining amount required was raised by the issue of £100 debentures at sixty-three and the imposition of new taxes on salt and leather.⁵

¹ No. 25 Merrion Street: The Georgian Society, *Records of Eighteenth Century Domestic Architecture and Decoration in Dublin*, i. 38; iv. 67-8. Lease dated April 3, 1801, between T. Conolly and D. La Touche, etc.: Registry of Deeds, Dublin (536/92). The house (now 5 Upper Merrion Street) is at present part of the Irish Free State Government offices. When he took up his residence, Castlereagh appears to have still retained his old lodgings in North Great George's Street: *Stewart's Gentleman's Almanack*, 1798, at p. 53 (Dublin, 1798).

² Camden to Pelham, Dec. 30 (enclosure from Castlereagh): Pelham MSS.

³ Castlereagh to Pelham, Dec.: Dublin Castle MSS. (Departmental Correspondence).

⁴ Camden to Pitt, Jan. 1798: Pitt MSS. 326.

⁵ Lecky, iv. 226.

3

While Ulster presented a perplexed calm throughout the autumn of 1797, the United Irish conspiracy was rapidly spreading to other parts of the country. Rumours were current that Napoleon was busy organising an expedition for Ireland, and that the rebel leaders in Dublin had formed a plot to seize the Castle and gain possession of the capital and, if necessary, assassinate the principal members of the administration. It was said that Wolfe Tone, Arthur O'Connor, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and Valentine Lawless were deep in the treason, working for an immediate rising with the aid of a French invasion. The connection between France and the United Irish movement had been officially known for some time. The English Government had an excellent and invaluable secret service at its command, by means of which it derived the fullest reports of the intrigues which were being carried on between the revolutionary leaders in both countries. The controlling factor in the network of espionage on the Continent was William Wickham, the British minister at Berne. French emigrants and spies had flocked in large numbers to Switzerland, and this had enabled Wickham to open up important channels of communication with leading Frenchmen employed by the Directorate. Many of the latter, particularly in the Foreign Office, were in English pay, and Wickham's confidential correspondence reveals the interesting fact that on behalf of Pitt he paid Pichegru and other French generals considerable sums of money to allow themselves to be beaten in battle.¹ The English Government thus learned that another French invasion of Ireland was in contemplation.

The expected revolt in northern Ireland earlier in the year had hung fire pending the assistance of French arms. In April Edward Lewins, a sincere United Irishman and a Catholic with an expert knowledge of the French language, had been sent over on behalf of the rebel executive to Hamburg, where he was instructed to renew negotiations with the French minister, Reinhard. He had been followed in June by William James MacNevin, a Catholic physician, and possibly the ablest member of the United Irish Executive. On his arrival Dr. MacNevin drew up

¹ *Wickham Correspondence*, i. *passim* (privately printed, 1870).

an able and detailed 'memorial' on the state of Ireland and the means of invading it. He pointed out that it was only in the north and north-west of the province of Ulster, where 150,000 United Irishmen were enrolled and organised, that an invading force could look for any effective help, and he suggested Lough Swilly as the best landing-place. He also mentioned that the Prince of Wales had recently sent over a confidential agent to Ireland in the hopes of creating a national desire to have him as Lord-Lieutenant on the understanding that he would support Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform and would introduce a complete change in the prevailing system of local government. MacNevin went on to state that the leaders of the Opposition in Parliament had refused to take part in this scheme, which he attributed to their belief in an approaching French invasion, adding that the Prince of Wales desired ameliorative legislation in Ireland in order to counteract French influence there. He urged General Hoche to publish a proclamation stating that the French were coming as allies to deliver and not as enemies to conquer Ireland, and he concluded the 'memorial' with a wealth of military and topographical detail.¹

MacNevin entrusted the 'memorial' to Reinhard, by whom it was translated and forwarded to Paris. *En route*, however, it was intercepted and transcribed by a spy, so that a copy reached Pitt as soon as the original entered the archives at the Quai d'Orsay. The spy was Samuel Turner, a former member of the Ulster Directory; he was much in the confidence of Lady Edward Fitzgerald, and appears to have found the 'memorial' in her letter bag, where it had been placed by Reinhard for transmission to De la Croix, the French Foreign Minister. Several important letters from Reinhard to De la Croix relating to the mission of Lewins had already found their way into Pitt's hands in this manner.² About the same time the French Government sent a

¹ Lecky, iv. 141-147. The original version of the memorial, which has never been published, is in the archives of the French Foreign Office. The greater part of it will be found with a translation in the *Castlereagh Correspondence*, i. 295-301, but the passage relating to the Prince of Wales is there omitted.

² *Cast. Corr.* i. 272-85. W. J. Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service under Pitt*, 62. That Turner was the source of this information (for long a matter of conjecture) is conclusively proved by one of Castlereagh's letters in the Home Office archives—Castlereagh to Camden, July 15, 1798: H.O. Ireland, 78.

Swede named Jägerhorn to London with instructions to go on to Ireland and report on the local situation. The Home Office at Whitehall refused to give Jägerhorn a passport to land in Ireland, but he managed to see Lord Edward Fitzgerald in London, and as the result of this interview the Swede submitted a report to the Quai d'Orsay which agreed in substance with MacNevin's 'memorial.'¹ In spite of these assurances, the French authorities were in reality very dilatory in the preparation of another Irish expedition, and to the keen observer appeared disinclined to risk a repetition of Bantry Bay. However, the English Government was determined not to be caught off its guard a second time.

The successful disarming of Ulster, the rapid rise of Orangeism, and the increased sense of popular loyalty perceptible in the raising of yeomanry corps throughout the country had the effect of hurrying the remains of the rebel movement in the north into alliance with the lower classes of Catholicism in the south and west. This alliance, which was largely cemented by the belief of the Catholic masses that Orangeism was an organised conspiracy to massacre them with the support of the English Government, completely changed the political character of the United Irish movement. Henceforward the struggle assumed the form of a religious war. Outrages and military reprisals became a daily occurrence in Leinster and Munster.

The substitution of Abercromby for Carhampton as Commander-in-Chief of the forces, which took place in December, only added to the difficulties of the internal situation. Sir Ralph Abercromby was a courageous and humane soldier with a distinguished record to his credit, but he misjudged the extent of the danger in Ireland. He abused the yeomanry and wished to remove the militia, and in fact spent most of his time quarrelling with Camden and Lake. On the other hand, it is only fair to state that from the moment of his arrival in Ireland he was confronted by two extremely trying problems in the anomalous nature of his post and the serious growth of indiscipline among the troops. The post of Commander-in-Chief was entirely subordinate to that of the Viceroy, 'to whom every application, even of the most trifling kind, must be made and by him directed.' As

¹ *Cast. Corr.* i. 286-89. Jägerhorn's report was also intercepted and copied by Turner.

Sir John Moore, Abercromby's General of Brigade, put it : ' In quiet times a Commander-in-Chief has been little attended to, and the army has been considered little more than an instrument of corruption in the hands of the Lord-Lieutenant and his Secretary.' ¹ One of the results of this system of dual military control, was, in Abercromby's words, ' that the general officers write directly to the Castle, overlooking every decency and order.' ' Almost all of those who were here before me,' continued the new Commander-in-Chief, ' have a plot or a conspiracy which they cherish, and which is the subject of their correspondence and consequence ; and instead of attending to their duty and to the discipline of their troops, they are either acting as politicians or as justices of the peace, a situation which most of them have solicited.' ²

The great source of indiscipline lay in the scattered state of the forces. ' The best regiments in Europe could not long stand such usage,' wrote Abercromby a few weeks after his arrival.³ In this way they were exposed to corruption, also to be easily disarmed and made prisoners ; when they were needed they could not be rapidly assembled, and of course they produced infinite popular irritation.⁴ To a large extent the trouble was due to the country gentlemen, who were afraid to do their duty. (' They are timid and distrustful, and ruin the troops by calling on them upon every occasion to execute the law and to afford them personal protection.' ⁵) Abercromby therefore restricted the regular forces to the standing orders of the Kingdom, and made it clear that for the preservation of their lives and properties private individuals must depend upon the thirty-five thousand yeomanry which were expressly raised for this purpose. In the famous general orders of February 26, 1798, he further stated that the army of which he had recently received the supreme command was ' in a state of licentiousness which must render it formidable to everyone but the enemy.' He then directed that in no case

¹ *Diary of Sir John Moore*, i. 271 (ed. Maurice).

² Abercromby to his son, April 23, 1798 : Lord Dunfermline, *Sir Ralph Abercromby*, 109.

³ Abercromby to Pelham, Jan. 23 : Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 86.

⁴ Abercromby to Lake, Dec. 13, 1797 : Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 79.

⁵ Abercromby to the Duke of York, Dec. 28 : Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 84.

where military assistance was demanded by a civilian were the troops to act without the presence and authority of a civil magistrate, 'and the most clear and precise orders are to be given to the officer commanding the party for the purpose.'¹ The Lord-Lieutenant at once realised that such an order was incompatible with his Proclamation of the previous summer, which expressly empowered the military to act without waiting for the authority of a civil magistrate,² and he thereupon commanded Abercromby to revoke it, which the Commander-in-Chief was reluctantly obliged to do. Clare went so far as to assert that Abercromby 'must have lost his senses,' and he immediately set about forming a cabal with the Speaker, Beresford and Cooke to procure his removal whilst he was absent on a tour of inspection in the north.³ Clare even hoped to impeach him, and it was decided that a motion should be forthwith introduced in the House of Commons to the effect 'that Sir Ralph Abercromby had by his conduct proved himself an enemy to his country.' Fortunately, Pelham got wind of these proceedings in time to counteract them and so avert a disgraceful scene in Parliament. Nevertheless, the tactics of the reactionary party were completely successful. Abercromby, who naturally jibbed at any political interference with the Commander-in-Chief's power, sent in his resignation in disgust, and his place was taken by Lake, the 'cabinet' nominee and the general who is believed to have encouraged more than any other the vicious system which Abercromby had been seeking to rectify. At Camden's urgent request, however, he consented not to leave the country until he had visited a number of disturbed counties in the south and west.⁴

4

The last Irish Parliament opened in January 1798. In spite of the absence of a number of familiar figures whom one missed from their places on the Opposition benches, and in spite also of the decline of public interest in its proceedings, it was still a very

¹ Seward, *op. cit.* iii. 214 ; Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 93.

² See above, p. 186.

³ Clare to Auckland, March 26, 1798 : *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 395.

⁴ Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 108-11, 122. Camden to Portland, March 30 : H.O. Ireland, 80.

vital assembly. In the House of Lords, Lord Moira drew attention to some of the more flagrant alleged military outrages in a speech which was afterwards widely circulated and discussed.¹ In the Commons Sir Lawrence Parsons delivered as powerful a speech in moving for a Committee of the whole House 'to enquire into the state of the country and to suggest such measures as are likely to conciliate the popular mind and restore tranquillity.'² He was answered from the Treasury Bench by Castlereagh, who with equal ability showed, in his uncle's words, that 'every measure taken by government was necessary to curb the previous licentiousness of the people.'³ Castlereagh was obliged to defend at some length the necessity for coercive measures, which in his opinion were only justified by the alarming state of the country, particularly the north. He traced the extent of the treasonable communications with France, potato diggings, attacks on yeomanry, assassination of magistrates, etc., and he asked whether government could be fairly expected to look on tamely and suffer all this without stirring a finger to prevent it. He pointed out that Lake's Proclamation of March 13, 1797, had produced an immediate effect towards restoring tranquillity in Ulster. If government had been inactive would not Sir Lawrence Parsons, he asked, have been the first to impeach its conduct?

'Men who loved the Constitution did not now desire Reform so anxiously as they might have done heretofore. They saw that in the present temper of agitation the respect, the property or the wisdom of the country would not be brought into Parliamentary Reform; they saw that the specious emissary or the turbulent demagogue would fill their places, and they would have ever to regret the admission which such a change would afford to such persons. Factious and desperate men well knew that if their object of a French communication could be procured, the Gentlemen of Ireland would never be the instruments of that connexion, and that into their own hands would fall the management of the country.'

He concluded by exhorting the House to do its duty, and his words made a very real impression:

'It therefore became every man of loyalty and spirit to stand forward, to consider that he had no ordinary cause to inspire him; that his life,

¹ *Report of a Debate in the Irish House of Lords, February 19, 1798.*

² Seward, iii. 215-20.

³ Camden to Portland, March 6: H.O. Ireland, 75.

his property, his dearest friends, his family, his children were all at stake, and to act like a man worthy of such a cause. And it was with pride and delight he observed that at no one moment of his recollection had the loyalty, the spirit, the honour of Ireland, been so supported, so diffused and so ardent as at the moment he had the honour to address the Assembly.' ¹

The House responded courageously, and Parsons' motion was lost by 156 votes to 19.² It was a strange irony that the seconder of this motion should have been Lord Caulfield, son of Castle-reagh's old friend Charlemont. Caulfield had made it the occasion of his maiden speech, and the slowly dying Charlemont was able to inform Haliday with some pride that 'my son's success in his first parliamentary attempt most certainly affords me real pleasure, and I have the still higher satisfaction of perceiving that, whatever his abilities may be, his principles are precisely as I would wish them.' ³

By reason of the unwillingness of informers to testify in open court, the authorities had not as yet succeeded in bringing any of the leading conspirators to justice. But now they were in a position to strike a decisive blow. A young Catholic gentleman named Thomas Reynolds, who was in the confidence of the supreme United Irish executive, came forward with information and consented to give evidence in public. In consequence of this assurance a swoop was made upon the house of one Oliver Bond in Dublin, where almost the whole of the provincial directory of Leinster had met on March 12 to concert final preparations for a rising. The arrests which followed did not, however, include Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who had been advised by the cunning Reynolds not to attend the meeting and now went into hiding with a price on his head.⁴ About the same time Arthur O'Connor, in company with a Catholic priest named O'Coigly and an English Jacobin named Binns, were arrested at Margate on their way to France.⁵ Shortly afterwards Thomas Emmet and Dr. MacNevin,

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, March 9.

² *H. of C. Journals*, xvii. 285.

³ Charlemont to Haliday, May 3 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 321.

⁴ Lecky, iv. 260-2. The warrant for his arrest was issued by Pelham on March 12. See Camden to Portland, March 19 : H.O. Ireland, 75.

⁵ Lecky, iv. 258. The warrants for the arrest of O'Connor and other United Irish leaders, including Neilson and Russell, were issued by Castle-reagh. The originals are preserved with the Sirr MSS. in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

two of the most important heads of the movement, who had escaped the holocaust of March 12, were taken in Dublin. The meshes of authority were slowly closing round the conspiracy. Lord Edward's flight deprived the rebel forces in the field of a leader, and for the moment the supreme executive was completely paralysed. A slight breathing space followed, in which the opposing parties took stock of their resources.

Lord Edward Fitzgerald was indeed one of the sharpest thorns in the side of authority. He was immensely popular in all ranks of society, and his brother, the Duke of Leinster, was the premier peer of Ireland. For Castlereagh he constituted a particular source of embarrassment, since Lady Castlereagh was his cousin and her relations the Conollys were deeply attached to him. In common with the other members of the government Castlereagh secretly hoped that the renegade young lord would make good his escape to France, where in point of fact popular rumour had credited him with having already arrived. Lady Louisa Conolly was in great distress about him, and in the hopes of obtaining some news she asked to see his brother, Lord Charles Fitzgerald, with whom according to another report he had been seen driving in a post-chaise at Newry. A meeting was arranged in the house of a government friend named Pakenham. On her arrival she was to her surprise confronted by Castlereagh, who explained to her that Lord Charles had been so overcome on hearing of the flight that he had immediately set off for the country 'to get out of the way.' Lady Louisa was almost hysterical in her anxiety, and pumped Castlereagh with all manner of enquiries. Castlereagh consoled her as best he could. 'I fear I cannot answer your questions, for you know I am bound to secrecy,' he said, but added reassuringly, 'Pray don't believe any reports you hear, for upon my word *nothing has yet transpired*. You may rely upon the earnest wishes of government to do all they can for Lord Edward who is so much loved, and as he can't be found, no harm can happen to him. I pity Lady Edward most exceedingly, and will do all in my power to send her back her private letters.'

This interview took place on March 14.¹ At that moment

¹ Journal of Lady Sarah Napier: T. Moore, *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 23-24.

Reynolds was in direct communication with Lord Edward : he told him that the ports were being purposely left open, and is even supposed to have pressed money upon him to assist a hasty departure from the country. Every means of escape were plainly indicated to Lord Edward, and it was made clear to him that all official facilities would be extended to him if he cared to avail himself of them. But Lord Edward preferred to stand his ground and make a last desperate effort to rally his followers. Actually it was not till over two months later that Under-Secretary Cooke was informed of his hiding-place, and Major Sirr set out on his fatal errand.¹

Castlereagh was now at a turning-point in his career, whose course was to be changed unalterably in the next few weeks. At the beginning of March Pelham in the relaxed condition of his physique developed a severe fever, and Camden noticed with alarm that it was 'attended with a spitting of blood.'² In a short time he was generally believed to be dying. The impossibility of carrying on the administration without an efficient Chief Secretary had been clear to Camden for some time, and he consequently wrote in haste to London for permission to appoint a successor, at least *pro tempore*. 'If Mr. Pelham should survive,' he explained to Portland, 'he must probably be unfit for business for so considerable a time that the public will suffer materially unless a Secretary is immediately appointed. That a gentleman unacquainted with this country should be sent over from England would be most inconvenient at present ; that any time should be lost in seeking for such a person cannot be allowed, and therefore I have notice taken in recommending that Lord Castlereagh should be appointed Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland forthwith, and in recommending this measure as one which is indispensable in the present situation of the country.' As for Castlereagh's being an Irishman, Camden considered that in normal times this objection might have some weight, but in the present extraordinary circumstances he submitted that it was completely counterbalanced by his other qualifications.³ 'He is universally respected here and is considered as perfectly adequate

¹ Cooke to Sirr, May 18 : Sirr MSS. See below, pp. 246 *et seq.*

² Camden to Portland, March 13 : H.O. Ireland, 75.

³ Camden to Portland, March 16 : H.O. Ireland, 75.

to the situation,' added Camden in a letter to Pitt, 'and I am confident he is so. The former objection to his being an Irishman cannot now be attended to, and under the present circumstances of the country and the unexampled difficulties of the moment from the rebellion which exists and the impression made by Sir Ralph Abercromby's orders, I cannot really go on for the moment unless this measure takes place. I hope to receive the King's consent by the return of the messenger.'¹ Pitt and Portland yielded to these entreaties, and immediately saw the King, who readily approved the nomination. At the same time, however, the Lord-Lieutenant was clearly given to understand that the appointment should only continue during Pelham's illness or until some other arrangement could be made.²

After the interview with Lady Louisa Conolly, Castlereagh returned to his regiment in Dundalk, but he was no sooner in quarters than an express reached him from the Lord-Lieutenant with instructions to return to town immediately and hold himself in readiness to take over Pelham's duties.³ He obeyed, but once in the Viceregal Lodge he protested his inexperience with a genuine sense of modesty, and suggested his friend Under-Secretary Elliot as better fitted than himself for the post. Elliot was accordingly approached and, as it happened, refused to consider the proposition on the plea that his health was not equal to the work involved. Castlereagh had now no alternative but to accept the task himself when called upon, and the Lord-Lieutenant reported the satisfactory outcome of his arguments to Whitehall.

'He is as desirous as I am that His Majesty's Ministers should understand the exact grounds on which he does not decline to undertake the very arduous situation I am at liberty to propose to him. He does it upon my assurance that in the present state of the country the introduction of a stranger to it in that situation would be infinitely inconvenient. He will undertake it if it is thought that his parliamentary abilities will be useful during the absence of Mr. Pelham. He will not refuse to lend himself to the public and to me until such an arrangement takes place as may be more beneficial to His Majesty's service. I feel the liberality of his conduct so strongly that I trust it will be equally felt by His Majesty's Ministers. I have also a perfect

¹ Camden to Pitt [March 16] : Pitt MSS. 326.

² Portland to Camden, March 19 : H.O. Ireland, 75.

³ Moore, *op. cit.* ii. 21.

confidence that his being a native of Ireland will neither sway his judgment nor his conduct.' ¹

Pelham, who had begun to show signs of recovery, was also consulted, and from the sickroom he graciously expressed himself as most anxious that the proposed change should take place without further delay.² On the night of March 29 'the Right Honourable Robert Stewart commonly called Lord Viscount Castlereagh' was therefore publicly appointed to be 'His Excellency's Chief Secretary in the room and during the indisposition of the Right Hon. Thomas Pelham.'³ When next morning Castlereagh entered the Chief Secretary's office in Dublin Castle it was at a most critical period in the history of his country.

5

With the exception of the two cathedrals, the oldest institution in Dublin is the Castle.⁴ Although, when Castlereagh entered it as Chief Secretary, its physical aspect had become more suggestive of a barracks than a castle, it retained its ancient nomenclature both as a military fortress and the seat of the King's Government in Ireland. In spite of recurrent political changes its appearance to-day has altered but little from that represented in the aquatints of Malton and Brocas, and the visitor to the Irish capital who beholds it for the first time can scarcely wonder that the constant procession of viceroys and their secretaries which passed through its portals for many hundreds of years should have thanked God for granting them this formidable protection in such a wild country. Impregnable Dublin Castle stood upon Cork Hill for eight centuries, till at last the long unbroken English occupation terminated with its voluntary surrender to native rulers, who are now seeking to forget the grievances which as an institution it so long personified in the popular imagination.

In the past Dublin Castle has served at least three important purposes : it has at once and at different periods been the centre

¹ Camden to Portland, March 23 : H.O. Ireland, 75.

² Camden to Portland, March 26 : H.O. Ireland, 80.

³ Faulkner's *Dublin Journal*, March 31. Camden to Portland, March 29 : H.O. Ireland, 75.

⁴ See C. L. Falkiner, *Illustrations of Irish History*, 3-40 ; also R. Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin* ; O'Connor Morris, *Dublin Castle* ; and R. Barry O'Brien, *Dublin Castle and the Irish People*, *passim*.

of the national administration, the seat of the high court of justice, and the guardian of state prisoners. The foundations of the building were laid in the reign of King John, and later in the thirteenth century there appeared the nucleus of the famous quadrilateral known as the Upper Castle Yard or the 'Devil's half-acre.'¹ In establishing English influence in Dublin and the fortified ring round the city known as the Pale, the Castle played an obvious and necessary part as a military encampment, and it was clearly marked out as the royal seat of government in the island. It was not, however, till the reign of Elizabeth that the Castle became the official Viceregal residence, and even then the presence of felons in the dungeons made the place so objectionable with pestilential odours that the Lord-Lieutenants and their suite were loathe to attend except on state business.

In 1798 the Castle consisted, as it does to-day, of two large squares and two towers, together with various outbuildings. In the so-called Upper Castle Yard were situated the state apartments of the Viceroy, the Council Chamber, the College of Arms and a number of administrative offices. Above the entrance from Cork Hill rotted on spikes the heads of traitors lately brought to justice. The Chief Secretary's office lay in the north-east corner of this square; it was a spacious airy room on the first floor, facing south and commanding a view of the handsome colonnade which formed the entrance to the state apartments. This room possessed two doors, one of which opened into the office of the Under-Secretary for the Civil Department, and the other into a passage leading to the famous chamber where the Privy Council was wont to assemble. Beyond the Council Chamber was another corridor which led to the offices of the Lord Chancellor, the Attorney- and Solicitor-General, and ultimately to the Viceroy's private quarters and the state apartments. Through the archway on the east side of the square one passed down a steep decline to the Lower Castle Yard, which contained the state chapel, prison and armoury, and the offices of the Records, Treasury, Ordnance and Military Under-Secretary. Thus were united within a comparatively small compass the chief executive and administrative authorities in the country.

¹ It measures exactly 70 yards by 30 ($\frac{1}{2}$ acre): J. G. Swift MacNeil, *How the Union was Carried*, 147, note.



THE UPPER CASTLE YARD, DUBLIN CASTLE

From a print of the drawing by James Malton in the British Museum

Since the thirteenth century the English monarch had been represented in Ireland by a chief governor or viceroy, at first known as the Justiciary or Deputy and later styled the Lord-Lieutenant. His Excellency was expected to keep the main threads of executive government in his hands and to submit to London periodic accounts of the state of the country. But his principal and in a sense his most important duty was to administer agreeably to the wishes of the King and his English ministers the extensive Crown patronage in Ireland, by which means the support of the leading local families and their dependents might be secured. The viceroy's influence was, in fact, so great that even those offices which were specially reserved for the King's pleasure (such as Judgeships, Bishoprics, etc.) were almost always bestowed on his recommendation or that of his Chief Secretary, through whom applications for official favours usually passed. 'This patronage,' observed Castlereagh in a memorandum which he drew up for his own use, 'has been hitherto distributed in providing for the private connections of the Lord-Lieutenant, for procuring the support of members of Parliament, and in rewarding the services of individuals in different parts of the Kingdom.'¹ The jealousy and intrigue to which its exercise led was found by successive viceroys to form a serious impediment to every political transaction.² 'You must know,' wrote Lord Buckinghamshire when in office, 'that every favour bestowed upon an individual excites and produces the pretensions of many more. . . . Most Irish gentlemen enter my closet with a P in their mouths—Place, Pension, Peerage or Privy Council.'³

By virtue of his position the Lord-Lieutenant was obliged to maintain a large establishment for which, however, ample provision was made by the state. The official salary was £16,000 a year, and in addition to this His Excellency received £3,000 'for his equipage on being appointed.' The state also provided for

¹ Memorandum of the Patronage of Ireland : Londonderry MSS.

² Buckinghamshire to Germaine, Sept. 7, 1798 : Buck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 523).

³ Buckinghamshire to Stanley, April 9 ; to Thompson, Nov. 19, 1777 : Buck. MSS.

his Chief Secretary, Private Secretary, Gentlemen of the Bed Chamber, aides-de-camp, riding master, and Comptroller of the Household. Other members of his suite he was expected to provide for himself, such as chaplains, pages, and 'gentlemen at large' (the latter 'have nothing to do, nor a great deal to receive; they only wait behind you at table and have a claim for a belly-full' ¹). Besides his spacious private apartments and a large garden in the Castle the viceroy had two official residences outside the city—one a handsome Grecian lodge in Phoenix Park, and the other a pleasant seaside villa at Blackrock, whither he could retire for the summer months.

The ceremonial which the Lord-Lieutenant and his court consequently had to observe was very elaborate, and much of it was quite unnecessary. 'This is a place for a person who loves *La Représentation*,' wrote Lord Harcourt, the Lord-Lieutenant in 1772. 'To the chapel (though it is in the Castle) the Lord-Lieutenant is attended by his pages, gentlemen of the bed chamber, gentlemen at large, and has a closet better fitted up though not so large as his Majesty's at St. James. I could very willingly dispense with some of this state on my own account but that would be improper.' ² The public dinners were particularly trying, and ruined the constitution of at least one viceroy and the purses of many hosts. Lord Harcourt complained that, 'though they live in general very well here, there are few dinners worth the trouble of going to them with such attendance as the Lord-Lieutenant is obliged to have: a squadron of horse by way of guards and the battle axes, who are like our Yeomen of the Guard vulgarly called Beef-eaters, walking on each side of the chariot; and this is constantly the case when the Lord-Lieutenant goes to public dinners.' ³

Balls, levees, drawing-rooms and 'assemblies' could be equally tedious. Harcourt's son, Lord Nuneham, who had lost his luggage on the journey from England, was compelled to witness the first official function from a balcony in St. Patrick's Hall. 'I saw from a box, in company with a dirty valet de chambre and behind three rows of chambermaids, His Excellency's royal march

¹ Sir John Blaquiere to Lord Harcourt, July 24, 1772: *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 18 (privately printed, 1880-1905).

² Harcourt to Lady Nuneham, Dec. 25, 1772: *Harcourt Papers*, iii. 131.

into the ball room,' he said. 'I saw him mount his chair of state and stayed till the first minuet was concluded, which was performed with all the humiliating forms that are practised at St. James and which did not please me enough to make me desirous of seeing it twenty or thirty times repeated.'¹ The son of another Lord-Lieutenant in the eighteenth century was so bored that he became intoxicated every evening, a line of conduct to which his father does not appear to have entertained any marked objection.² Nor was Castle etiquette always precisely observed. One noble lord who actually 'presented himself in his frock' for an audience of the Lord-Lieutenant was sent away with the polite request to return properly dressed if he wished to see His Excellency.³ When times were hard it was not unusual to find that 'the not being able to afford the expense of a dress prevents the few ladies who are in Dublin from coming to the Castle,' even though their husbands or fathers were 'persons of the first property' in the Kingdom.⁴ But some serviceable apparel could usually be obtained for these affairs, notwithstanding that 'the Duchess of Devonshire's distinguishing eye might possibly discover an inaccuracy in the arrangement of the ladies' feathers and Mr. Boothby some inelegance in the coiffure of the men.'⁵

As a residence the Castle could scarcely be said to be attractive. It was unhealthy, and the absence of feminine society except at comparatively infrequent intervals sometimes had distressing psychopathic effects upon those who were obliged to live for long periods within its walls. In spite of Angelica Kauffmann's reliefs and Robert Adam's fireplaces all the apartments were badly furnished, 'worse,' in the opinion of one Chief Secretary, 'than any private gentleman's house in England.'⁶ Thieves abounded on every staircase and corridor. Harcourt estimated that there were four or five false keys to every room and to every table and

¹ Lord Nuneham to W. Whitehead, Dec. 1772 : *Harcourt Papers*, iii. 116.

² Buckinghamshire to Thompson, Nov. 25, 1777 : Buck. MSS.

³ Buckinghamshire to Germaine, Feb. 2, 1777 : Buck. MSS.

⁴ Buckinghamshire to Suffolk, Oct. 15, 1779 : Buck. MSS.

⁵ Buckinghamshire to Suffolk, Feb. 1777 : Buck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 523).

⁶ Charles Abbot, Chief Secretary, 1801-2 : *Colchester Correspondence*, i. 289.

chest of drawers, though the locks were changed often. On the night of this viceroy's arrival the Master of Ceremonies was robbed of all his clothes and some money, and on the following night another member of his suite 'lost out of his drawers six pair of new silk stockings.' Lord Nuneham, who was an acute observer, attributed these disgraceful proceedings to the shocking contrast which existed between the splendour of the viceroy and the wretchedness of the people. 'The pageantry of the procession to the House of Lords and the sort of homage paid to the Lord-Lieutenant did not enchant me,' he confessed, 'for it exceeded even what I had expected ; and the guards on horseback, the principal officers of the Household with their wands, and the pages in their liverys paddling on foot through the mud, with grooms of the chambers and footmen, through the streets lined with soldiers, had an air of absolute monarchy and of military force to support it, that, had I been an Irishman, I am certain I could not have endured the sight of.'¹

6

Theoretically the government of the country was conducted by the Lord-Lieutenant acting through the Privy Council. Practically it was conducted for all important purposes by the Lord-Lieutenant's Chief Secretary. This individual, who was invariably a Privy Councillor, sat in Parliament and discharged, in addition to his administrative duties, the principal government business in the House of Commons. Latterly he had come to sustain the burden of debate on the Treasury Bench. It is not known precisely when the office of Chief Secretary first appears, but it was probably little earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century. It has been suggested that its origin was due to the desire of some Lord-Lieutenant to get his private secretary into Parliament. Certainly the Chief Secretary was at first the Lord-Lieutenant's nominee, coming over and leaving the country with him.² Addison is known to have been Chief Secretary to Lord Wharton in 1709, when, according to Macaulay, the office

¹ Nuneham to Whitehead, Dec. 1772 : *Harcourt Papers*, iii. 117.

² O'Brien, *op. cit.* 36 ; H. Wood, *Guide to the Public Records of Ireland*, 204.

was worth about £2,000 a year.¹ It was also about this time that the Secretary of State for Ireland, the responsible official for the administration of local affairs, became an absentee, and most of his work automatically passed into the Chief Secretary's hands.

Shortly after 1760 (the year at which the authentic list of Chief Secretaries² begins) the office was put upon the Establishment, but its income remained uncertain,³ and it was not till 1794 that the official salary was fixed at £4,000 a year.⁴ In Parliament he was still not expected to speak except where the interest of Great Britain or anything personally affecting the Lord-Lieutenant was discussed, leaving other government business to the Law Officers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State. When Pelham became Chief Secretary in 1795 it was decided to increase his prestige and authority in the country by giving him in addition the old office of Secretary of State (administratively long since a sinecure, but which had always been given to a strong debater on the Government side of the House). It was directly in consequence of this accession that the Chief Secretary had come to lead for the Government in the House.⁵ Although the office was considered to be personal to the Lord-Lieutenant, being granted not by letters patent from the Crown but by verbal communication and publication in the *Gazette*, the question now arose whether the present holder did not automatically vacate his seat in the House of Commons and seek re-election. In the past the office had always been held by an Englishman, who did not enter the Irish Parliament until *after* his appointment, so that this

¹ Macaulay, *Essays*, iv. 208 (ed. 1877). This remuneration arose from fees payable on warrants, commissions, etc., for not being originally on the Establishment the office had no salary attached to it: Wood, *loc. cit.*

² Haydn, *Book of Dignities*, 562.

³ In 1772 it was between £3,500 and £4,000 p.a.: *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 18.

⁴ In addition to an annual allowance of £500 for travelling expenses. *Liber Munerum Publicorum Hiberniae*, vii. 148.

⁵ 'Considerations upon the situation of the Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary. Drawn up by Lord Pelham.' Sept. 1801: *Colchester Corr.* i. 305. The salary of Secretary of State was £1,500 p.a. and its holder had the power of committing for sedition and opening letters in the post. It should be noted that Castlereagh was never Secretary of State, though sometimes referred to as such. Pelham continued to hold the office till 1801, when it was given to Abbot. On Abbot's resignation in 1802 it ceased to exist. See H. Wood, 'The Offices of Secretary of State for Ireland, etc.,' *passim*.

question only arose when Castlereagh took over Pelham's duties. A private member immediately raised it in the House of Commons by moving that the new Secretary had vacated his seat for County Down.¹ A select committee was appointed to search for precedents ; but in consequence of its finding that the office did not strictly speaking constitute a place of profit under the Crown, the motion was defeated. Castlereagh was thereupon confirmed in his place by a resolution of the House.² A similar motion was to be introduced during the Union debates, and to meet with the same fate.³

As has been seen, the office of Chief Secretary had never before been held by an Irishman, and the repugnance which was shown in certain official quarters when Camden proposed to depart from this custom was only overcome when the exceptional requirements of the country at that time became known.⁴ Buckinghamshire had long before pointed out the difficulty which a native appointment would cause in normal times. 'The nomination of any gentleman of this Kingdom would unavoidably lead to intrigue and jealousy,' he said. 'England can scarcely pay too great attention to the appointing a very able man . . . but he must be a master of address and insinuation as well as information and ability.'⁵

Though it was not yet the deep grave of political reputations that it was destined later to become, the Chief Secretaryship was by no means an enviable post to fill. It was frequently given to young and untried politicians in the hopes that they might more easily win their spurs at Westminster ; but most of such individuals did not survive more than one Irish winter. Others who were more able and more conscientious succumbed to the unaccustomed pressure of work and the climate. 'If an Irish Secretary does his own business,' remarked one of this number, 'he is like the first

¹ John Vandeleur, M.P. for Ennis : *Belfast News-Letter*, April 27, 1798.

² Vandeleur's motion was defeated by 45 votes to 4 : *H. of C. Journals*, xvii. 316 ; *Belfast News-Letter*, April 30. The text of the Committee's report will be found in *H. of C. Journals*, xvii. Part 2, Appendix, at p. 684 ; also in *Liber Munerorum Publicorum Hiberniae*, vii. 148.

³ See below, p. 294.

⁴ See above, pp. 207-208.

⁵ Buckinghamshire to North, to Hillsborough, Jan. 26, 1780 : Buck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 523).

flower in a glass house and cannot be expected to live.’¹ Some, indeed, never reached the Castle at all, and others only came over at convenient intervals, leaving their work to be conducted by the under-secretaries and law officers. The member of the Opposition who introduced the motion in the House of Commons relating to Castlereagh’s seat, referred in the following significant terms to the office of Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland :

‘ Nothing could be more auspicious for this country than that a situation of such importance should not be filled up by men who come over here but to be schooled,—men who are everything but politicians,—men whose only qualifications may be to drive a curricule in Hyde Park, and men who are sent hither to get the first rudiments of new political practice by trying experiments upon the Irish nation. It is not men of fashion that this country wants to direct its affairs—dancing masters and men who have learned only to make a bow and squeeze a hand are not the persons who should be entrusted with the administration of Irish affairs.’²

In addition to endangering their health, those Chief Secretaries who did venture across the Channel had often to face the studied contempt of the principal inhabitants. Thus Buckinghamshire was astonished at the different language employed towards himself and his secretary on the same morning. ‘ A gentleman who leaves me with a bow of obsequiousness or a dimpled cheek,’ he observed, ‘ before he reaches my Secretary has his sword loose in his scabbard.’³ The Chief Secretary was the minister through whom the requests for the Lord-Lieutenant’s patronage normally passed, and in this capacity he was liable to be made a particular object of attack by unsuccessful suppliants. When Sir John Blaquiere came over as Chief Secretary to Lord Harcourt in 1772, the notorious Beauchamp Bagenal applied for leave of absence on behalf of a relation who was with his regiment in America. Blaquiere replied politely that to grant such leave to officers on active service did not lie within the viceroy’s province. To his surprise Bagenal, who was a well-known duellist, sent him a challenge, and a meeting took place with pistols in Phoenix

¹ Eden to Loughborough, Jan. 12, 1780 : *Auck. Corr.* i. 326.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, April 27, 1798.

³ Buckinghamshire to Thompson, Aug. 21, 1779 : *Buck. MSS.*

Park. Though at Bagenal's request the principals were placed nearer than usual, the desired propinquity of his antagonist did not prevent him from clean missing Blaquiere five times, while the latter simply fired in the air. At the sixth attempt Bagenal succeeded in putting a bullet through the Secretary's hat, and Blaquiere was about to fire in the air again when the seconds interfered.¹ As a result of this encounter Blaquiere became perhaps the most popular Chief Secretary there has ever been in Ireland; and it is significant that after his term of office had expired he did not, like his predecessors, return to England, but continued to live in the country of his adoption, where his geniality, wit and good living made him justly famous. It may be added here that though he was well over sixty years of age in 1798, Sir John Blaquiere still visited the Castle to consult the Chief Secretary, and Castlereagh was to find his assistance as a manager most valuable alike in the House of Commons and at the private dinner table.

As a rule, however, the Chief Secretary came among the people a stranger and remained an enemy, unsympathetic and misunderstood. Looking from his windows in the Upper Castle Yard he would watch the main stream of Irish national life pass by, in the words of one of the last to hold the office, 'with a curious expression of mingled cynicism and amusement, coupled also with a passionate tutorial desire to teach the wild Irish people how to behave themselves.'² If Castlereagh had a little of this attitude in his character, the fault (if indeed it may be so called) was largely offset by the first-hand knowledge of the country and its inhabitants which he possessed. Dreaded enough as the Chief Secretaryship was in the days of Harcourt and Buckinghamshire, after 1795 its disadvantages for an Englishman became greater than ever by reason of the leading *rôle* which he was now compelled to play in Parliament. This increase of work probably contributed much to Pelham's illness, and it is doubtful whether any competent Englishman could have been found to take his place at such a critical time. In fact one individual, who had been pressed to do so a short while before, roundly declared that £10,000 a year would not compensate his feelings and health for

¹ Froude, ii. 161.

² Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell: *Hansard* clxxiv. 83 (May 8, 1907).

the sacrifice which he knew he must make in accepting the office.¹ Then quite apart from the question of an adequate knowledge of local conditions, it is equally certain that no Englishman could have coped effectively with the work which faced the Chief Secretary in March 1798. William Wickham, who was now one of the Under-Secretaries in the Home Office at Whitehall, though somewhat reserved at first in his official communications with Castlereagh, dropped the veil as soon as he realised the manner and extent of the latter's industry. 'The very candid and dispassionate manner in which your lordship is in the habit of considering all public affairs,' he told him in confidence, 'leaves no doubt that your opinion of the general temper of the state of the country will be taken and abided by.'²

7

Of the officials who constituted the administrative personnel in the Castle, those most intimately connected with the Chief Secretary were the two Under-Secretaries and his private secretary.

Though the two Under-Secretaries were theoretically on an equality, in fact the more important was the Under-Secretary for the Civil Department.³ Twenty years' faithful service in the Castle had made Edward Cooke the leading authority on every detail connected with the government of the country.⁴ 'No one understands Ireland better than Mr. Cooke,' Camden informed the Prime Minister.⁵ An Englishman and an old Etonian, Cooke had proceeded about the year 1778 direct from King's College, Cambridge (of which his father was Provost), to Dublin as one of Buckinghamshire's private secretaries. He continued to discharge the duties of a private secretary under several successive viceroys, thus acting for Pelham during the latter's short Chief Secretary-

¹ Thomas Steele, Portland to Pelham, Jan. 5, 1796 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 101).

² W. Wickham to Castlereagh, Nov. 26, 1798 : H.O. Ireland, 79.

³ Each Under-Secretary received an annual salary of £1,414, but Cooke held in addition the sinecure office of Customer of Kinsale (worth £500 p.a.). Memorandum of Salaries : Londonderry MSS.

⁴ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xii. 79. Walker's *Hibernian Magazine*, Dec. 1799, at p. 363.

⁵ Camden to Pitt, June 16, 1798 : Pitt MSS. 326.

ship in 1783-1784. In 1786 Rutland procured him a Clerkship to the Irish House of Commons ; and profiting by the wholesale dismissal of Crown servants after the Regency crisis three years later, he was appointed Under-Secretary for the Military Department.¹ About the same time he commenced to contribute political pamphlets and squibs for Government to the *Freeman's Journal*, showing thereby a talent which was to prove of considerable use to Castlereagh at a later date.

As an Under-Secretaryship in Ireland was tenable with a seat in Parliament, Cooke entered the House of Commons, becoming a member in the same year as Castlereagh. He had already proved himself a fair man of business ; and if he did not now distinguish himself as a speaker in the House, he at least turned out to be a good manager and ' Whip.' He immediately joined the Beresford party, bitterly opposing concessions to the Catholics and every political reform. He was therefore amongst those officials whom Fitzwilliam singled out for dismissal as a prelude to his short but famous viceroyalty. It is significant that Fitzwilliam afterwards declared that on his arrival in Ireland he found Cooke as powerful as a minister, and that in consequence ' his tone and style rendered his approach to a superior not to be supported.'² He was reinstated by Camden along with the others who had been similarly treated, and in the following year he was promoted to the Civil Department owing to the retirement of Sackville Hamilton. One of the first duties which fell to him in his new post had been to prepare the warrant for the arrests of Neilson, Teeling and the other United Irish leaders which Castlereagh helped to carry out in the autumn of 1796. Thereafter he sought to leave no means untried in effectually crushing the conspiracy, and in this (as he himself was the first to admit) he was not unsuccessful.³ A captured rebel has recorded his impression of ' the extraordinary appearance of Mr. Cooke's office in the Castle,' whither he was brought as a prisoner about this time. ' It was full of those arms which had been at different times and in various parts of the

¹ In the place of Charles Sheridan (brother of the dramatist, Richard Brinsley Sheridan), who was dismissed.

² *Letter from Lord Fitzwilliam to the Earl of Carlisle, passim* (Dublin, 1795).

³ Cp. summary of Cooke's Irish services by himself in Cooke to Pelham, July 21, 1801 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 107).

country wrested from the hands of the unfortunate peasants. They were chiefly pikes of a most rude workmanship and forms the most grotesque ; green crooked sticks cut out of hedges with long spikes, nails, knives or scythe blades fastened on the end of them, very emblematical of the poverty and desperation of these unhappy warriors ; and showing in a strong light the wonderful effects of despair and the courage it inspires. Never did human eyes behold so curious an armoury as this secretary's office.'¹

Such an interesting collection of relics of the fray may in part be accounted for by the fact that Cooke was in charge of the Secret Service Money, which he distributed with a judicious hand among a host of spies and informers. The official Treasury grant for this purpose was £5,000 a year ; and though the fund was considerably overdrawn during and immediately after the Rebellion, there is no doubt that its expenditure was properly applied, namely in 'detecting treasonable conspiracies'—and not, as has sometimes been suggested, in bribing members of the Irish Parliament to vote for the Union.² It may also be added that Cooke has been accused with apparent injustice of misappropriating specific sums from this fund for his own use.³

If the Civil Under-Secretary 'discharged the unpopular duties of his office with inflexible severity,' Charles Teeling, who interviewed him on the eve of his release from prison in 1798, admitted that he displayed 'the urbanity of manners which always distinguishes the gentleman, the courtesy which bespeaks a liberal mind.'⁴ Others who saw more of him thought differently.

¹ W. Sampson, *Memoirs*, 8 (London, 1832).

² The original MS. Secret Service Money Book is preserved in the library of the Royal Irish Academy. It is entitled 'Account of Secret Service Money applied in detecting treasonable conspiracies etc. pursuant to the provisions of the Civil List Act 1793.' The entries commence in 1795 and are in Cooke's handwriting down to 1801, during which period the total expenditure under this head was £47,449 7s. 1d. The MS., which was discovered by a carpenter when making alterations in the Castle, was sold as waste paper to a grocer, from whom it passed into Madden's hands ; it was ultimately purchased by Charles Haliday, who presented it to the Royal Irish Academy. Parts of it will be found in Madden's *United Irishmen*, and the complete version in Sir J. T. Gilbert's *Documents Relating to Ireland*, 1795-1804, pp. 1-88.

³ In particular a reward of £1,000 offered to the betrayers of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. See M. MacDonagh, *The Viceroy's Post-Bag*, 365-67.

⁴ C. H. Teeling : *Personal Narrative*, 110, 114.

Cornwallis, who was soon to succeed Camden as Lord-Lieutenant, declared that though Cooke was clever he was 'not a man of accommodating temper,' and classified him as a reactionary of the Anglo-Irish type of Clare and Beresford.¹ In this judgment Cornwallis was not absolutely accurate, for Cooke's mind was not shut to all change as in the question of Catholic Emancipation, which, though he had always opposed it in Parliament, he came principally through Castlereagh's influence to believe should accompany the Union. Letters written by him, of which a large number are preserved in the Auckland and Londonderry archives, frequently show the greatest political foresight and wisdom. His salient faults were an incurable jealousy and narrow-mindedness which spoiled much of his work—but for these, indeed, he might have been a successful politician as well as a really able administrator. He was continually quarrelling with the other officials in the Castle, and the latter asserted with apparent justification that owing to his zeal for managing everything in person the business of his office was always behindhand. However, he always seems to have been on good terms with his immediate superiors. He had the good sense to accept the appointment of an Irishman to be Chief Secretary and one who was nearly fifteen years his junior as 'unavoidable';² and, though he was never perhaps such a close personal friend of the new minister as were the other secretaries, Elliot and Knox, he and his chief were in complete accord on the main features of policy, and worked cordially enough together in the transaction of official business.

It was not till the Union struggle came on that his talents were seen to the best advantage. He acted as principal Government pamphleteer, and his apprenticeship to the *Freeman's Journal* was to enable him to make the most clear and convincing literary statement of the case for the great legislative measure.³ At the same time by his powers of tact and persuasion he did more probably than any other man, except Castlereagh himself, to keep together the wavering and uncertain Government majority in the House of Commons.

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Dec. 12, 1800 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 310.

² Cooke to Auckland, April 2, 1798 : *Auck. Corr.* iii. 400.

³ He was the anonymous author of *Arguments for and against an Union between Great Britain and Ireland considered* (Dublin, 1798).

The other Under-Secretary was responsible for the administration of the army. The post of Under-Secretary for the Military Department (or Secretary-at-War, as he was sometimes called) was filled by William Elliot, a brilliant young Scotsman of considerable property.¹ Lord Minto, to whom he was related, had supervised his education and general upbringing, and had taken him for the Grand Tour when as Sir Gilbert Elliot he went to Toulon as Civil Commissioner shortly after the outbreak of the war in 1793.² Richard Burke, whom he met at school, had introduced him to his father, and he immediately became a member of the intimate coterie at Beaconsfield, where his fluent and unforced arguments appear to have made a deep impression. In this way he met Fitzwilliam, Windham, and the other leading Whig politicians. On the occurrence of the 'Fitzwilliam episode' Edmund Burke had honoured him with a public letter suggesting the line which he as a promising young Whig should take, and this letter made him a convert to the cause of Catholic Emancipation.³ He was thereafter marked out for office.

Elliot came over to Ireland with Pelham early in 1796, and at first lived with him as a private secretary. On Cooke's promotion shortly afterwards he was chosen to fill the vacant place at the War Office, and he also obtained a seat in Parliament. The work of the War Office was considerably augmented about this time in consequence of the formation of numerous yeomanry corps throughout the country, but Elliot showed himself well able to keep pace with the increase of business.⁴ He was indeed a most conscientious and industrious official; and if he lacked the political foresight and shrewdness of Cooke, he possessed a far greater mastery of administrative detail than his colleague in the Civil Department. Both Lord-Lieutenants during his term of office preferred him to Cooke, and he was consequently entrusted with a number of delicate and confidential missions to England.

¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, lxxxviii. 467 (Nov. 1818); *Corn. Corr.* ii. 420, note.

² *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot*, ii. and iii. *passim*. *Windham Papers*, i. 155.

³ 'A Letter to William Elliot, Esq.,' May 26, 1795: Edmund Burke, *Collected Works*, v. 67.

⁴ See above, pp. 149-150. Pelham to Portland, March 31, 1796: H.O. Ireland, 62. Elliot to Windham, Nov. 2, 1796: *Windham Papers*, ii. 27.

Camden had even thought of making him Chief Secretary at the beginning of his viceroyalty, and Castlereagh himself proposed him for that office when Pelham fell ill. On each occasion his health appears to have been the principal bar to his acceptance. He suffered considerably from the damp climate, and his pale and sometimes haggard appearance caused him to be popularly known as the 'Castle Spectre.'

He was senior to Castlereagh by three years, and was perhaps his closest confidant in the Castle as well as a warm personal friend—in fact the similarity of their handwriting suggests that they had other characteristics and interests in common. After an illness resulting from one of his journeys Elliot went to convalesce in the Chief Secretary's Lodge in Phoenix Park, where he speedily made himself, in his host's words, 'the comfort of my life.'¹ 'I consider the occasion I have had of cultivating his friendship as one of the most fortunate events in my life,' Castlereagh told Pelham on another occasion, 'and never met any character to whom I felt myself more sincerely attached.'²

For his private secretary Castlereagh chose the eccentric individual popularly known as 'Spectacle Knox.' Though a martyr to nervous depression and subject to frequent attacks of epilepsy, Alexander Knox, now in his forty-second year, united brilliant conversational powers with a considerable degree of political understanding.³ The son of a prosperous burgher of Londonderry and descended from the Scottish reformer John Knox, he had inherited the strongest religious principles, which caused him in later years to revile himself mercilessly, describing the frivolities of youth in language suitable to the most heinous crimes. With no regular education, at the age of thirty he issued from his mother's bed-chamber, which the precarious state of his health had hitherto obliged him to share, and casting about for new interests, he appears to have formed some dubious connections,

¹ Castlereagh to Pelham, March 14, 1799 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Nov. 9, 1798 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

³ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xxxi. 304. See also an essay on Knox by the late Professor C. T. Stokes in the *Contemporary Review*, lii. 184 (Aug. 1887) ; and a biographical sketch by George Schoales in the *Ordnance Survey of the County of Londonderry*, 96.

social as well as political, though scarcely sufficient to justify his subsequent severe self-strictures. Those in the sphere of politics were the product of the fashionable republicanism of the day, and had brought him into close personal touch with the United Irish movement and its leaders in Ulster. This experience weaned him from radicalism, even from that of Charlemont and Haliday, and he gradually found himself for the same reasons as Castlereagh 'an unqualified supporter of the existing constitution.' His honest if pedantic soul revolted at the formation of a society for the avowed purpose of separating the two Kingdoms, and at the sight of the republican myrmidons 'exhibiting on their buttons the Irish harp *uncrowned*, and wearing trowsers that they might affect *sans-culotterie* even to the letter.'

During these years he published a number of essays, whose remarkable grasp of the true political circumstances of the country seems to have largely determined Castlereagh on obtaining his services. He was perhaps the first to show plainly what was not realised by English ministers till too late to prevent an insurrection, that the United Irish movement was primarily republican both in its conception and in its policy, and that parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation were entirely subordinate objects in the eyes of its leaders.¹ Nor was it, on the other hand, in origin a Roman Catholic plot, though as Knox pointed out, its founders had by 1798 come to regard the disaffection of the Irish Catholics as the chief instrument of their designs. 'No fact can be more established,' was his confident assertion, 'than that the Society of United Irishmen, from the moment of its first institution, has been with respect to its leading members a band of systematic traitors; that no possible means would have been adequate to their suppression but the most unrelenting coercion and the most vigorous resistance; and that nothing can be more insolently false than to represent them as having been provoked into treason

¹ This was denied by MacNevin, Emmet and O'Connor in their examination before the Secret Committees of Parliament and also in their memoir of the conspiracy (*Cast. Corr.* i. 353-372). But cp. report of Newell, an informer, that 'the idea of Parliamentary reform was a mere blind, that a total separation from England and the establishment of a republic are the sole objects of the United Irishmen.' Camden to Portland, April 1797: H.O. Ireland, 69. See also *Report of Secret Committee of the Commons*, Appendices xi, xxi, xxii.

by those strong measures on the part of Government, which were then only resorted to when both the common sense and common safety of the country irresistibly demanded them.' ¹

At first Knox entertained no ardent desire to become a private secretary, since he felt that his health would not be equal to the strain, but on being pressed by Castlereagh he finally consented, 'thinking that it would be madness to refuse such an offer.' ² He insisted, however, on receiving no remuneration for his services. His spirits immediately underwent a marked improvement in his new post, though his tendency towards philosophical speculation hindered the efficient discharge of his duties. 'I must own to you that my situation for the time being is not unpleasant,' he told a friend after he had been in the Castle a few months. 'It gives me something to do ; it gives me some power to do good-natured things. Every man has it in his power to oblige by courtesy, but no man more than the private secretary to a minister of state. The same civility from him is valued, from another despised. And there is room for amusing speculation too. It is a vantage ground from which the traversings of character and conduct may be well seen. I sit often at my ease and look from my window at the ebbing and flowing of the tide of men coming and going out of the Castle yard, *velut unda supervenit undam*, and like Lucretius's philosopher I enjoy it with a calm acquiescence in my own destiny.' ³ Castlereagh soon found that he did not understand the filing of papers and was a dismal failure in practical intercourse with the outside world, but that, on the other hand, when given a subject to talk or write upon he could deliver an excellent piece of reasoning. ⁴ He was therefore set to draw up the Report of the Secret Committee appointed by the House of Commons to enquire into the origin and causes of the rebellion, a task which it must be admitted he accomplished with conspicuous ability. ⁵ His health was poor, and in the following year he gladly welcomed resignation (August 1799). The immediate cause

¹ A. Knox, *Essays on the Political Circumstances of Ireland* (Dublin, 1798), Preface, xi-xii.

² A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 59 (London, 1836).

³ Knox to G. Schoales, July 20, 1798 : A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 31.

⁴ Teignmouth, *Reminiscences of Many Years*, i. 85.

⁵ On this *Report*, which was presented by Castlereagh to Parliament on August 21, 1798, see below, p. 415.

of this step appears to have been his ignorance of horsemanship, ability to ride long distances being an indispensable qualification for one in his position.¹

He was succeeded by a friend of Pelham's named Robert Marshall, from whom he took over the less exacting duties of Treasurer to the Catholic College of Maynooth.² Marshall's stronger physique was necessary when the time came to canvass in the cause of the Union, while his knowledge of the leading Catholics in the country made his services of additional value to the Chief Secretary. Knox, however, continued to be of use, particularly where the interests of the Dissenters were concerned, and whenever Castlereagh went to England they kept up an intimate correspondence. On one occasion while recovering from a serious illness, he wrote : ' Wherever I am, in whatever circumstances I may be, I must still, until consciousness and recollection leave me, think of you.' ³ At any rate Castlereagh thought enough of his former secretary's talents to invite him to represent his native city of Londonderry in the United Parliament ; and some years later, when the strong party feelings caused by the events in Ireland which they had both witnessed were considerably assuaged, it is significant that the minister should have asked him to write a history of the Union and have volunteered to supply him with original authorities for the work.⁴ But Knox, now a pathetic victim of hypochondria and a helpless introvert who dared not trust his own abilities, was unwilling to accept either of these generous invitations. His moroseness increased as his interest in theology deepened, culminating in a fit of temporary madness in which he almost destroyed himself by an act of physical mutilation (on realising, so it is said, that Sir Robert Peel's wife, to whom he had found himself violently attracted, refused to gratify his passion).⁵

Besides the Civil and Military Departments, there was another important branch of the Castle administration subordinate to the Chief Secretary. This was the Law Department, whose business

¹ Teignmouth, *loc. cit.*

² *Corn. Corr.* iii. 108.

³ Knox to Castlereagh, Feb. 9, 1801 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 29.

⁴ Castlereagh to Knox, March 30, 1811 : A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 539. See below, p. 444.

⁵ W. J. Fitzpatrick, *The Sham Squire*, 225.

it was to keep in constant communication with magistrates throughout the country and to prepare all public prosecutions. The permanent secretary in this department was an Anglo-Irishman named Alexander Marsden.¹ His duties seem to have extended far beyond his office. In 1798 he began to act also as a semi-official assistant to Cooke in the Civil Department, and in this capacity he was 'the person who conducted the *secret part* of the Union.'² Most of the records of these latter transactions have been lost owing to the intentional destruction of his papers before his death, but sufficient of his correspondence with Castlereagh has survived to show that he possessed the minister's confidence in no small degree; and it is therefore not surprising that on Cooke's resignation in 1801 Marsden should have been appointed Civil Under-Secretary.

With reference to his duties in the Law Department, it should be remembered that in Ireland the influence of the legal advisers of the Crown was much more direct and powerful than in England. The two Law Officers and the Lord Chancellor had offices in the Castle as well as at the Four Courts. The Attorney-General, besides being bound in conjunction with the Solicitor-General to advise the Government on all legal matters submitted for his opinion, was, unlike his English counterpart, invariably a member of the Privy Council, and as such was frequently consulted by the Lord-Lieutenant and Chief Secretary on points of general executive policy.³ In the Chief Secretary's absence he or his colleague usually led for the Government in the House of Commons, and was entrusted with the introduction of all official business in Parliament. It followed that the Lord Chancellor, who had always previously been a law officer, should exercise an even more extensive political influence. At this period the Earl of Clare, the first native to occupy the Irish woolsack, led the detested Castle clique which formed the core of the old Protestant Ascendancy Party. This harsh and unbending reactionary, who conducted an equally despotic *régime* in the council chamber as in the House of Lords, by his uncompromising hatred of the Roman Catholics and his loud-mouthed advocacy of coercion prob-

¹ *Corn. Corr.* ii. 456.

² Wickham to Hardwicke, Nov. 18, 1803: Dublin Castle MSS.

³ A. C. Ewald, *Life of Sir Joseph Napier*, 101-2.

ably did more than any other man of his times to promote an insurrection within the country. He was the only member of the administration who without shame publicly defended the use of torture for the purpose of discovering concealed arms ;¹ and he as openly declared his determination to make the Irish ' as tame as gelt cats.'² His overbearing manner led him into frequent quarrels with his colleagues, from which even Castlereagh (though he did his best to keep the peace on his side) could not escape.³ His bigotry and narrow-mindedness were scarcely offset by his parliamentary skill and legal knowledge, which at least commanded public respect.

By way of pleasing contrast was the Attorney-General, Arthur Wolfe, whose life both public and private had hitherto been most upright and humane ; he interfered as little as he could help in executive affairs. His elevation to the bench as Lord Kilwarden a few months after Castlereagh took office resulted in the appointment to his place of John Toler, the savage and blood-thirsty Solicitor-General. Toler's scanty knowledge of law even drew down the disapprobation of Clare on his official promotion, while his callousness and innate buffoonery singularly unfitted him for the conduct of State prosecutions and made him an object of general loathing and contempt. His powers of invective had already led him into some disgraceful scenes, including a brawl with Barrington on the floor of the House of Commons. The historian subsequently asserted when referring to this episode that ' though acute in general, he occasionally thought of so many things at once that he lost all recollection whether of place or circumstance.'⁴ As Lord Norbury he was destined to preside over the Court of Common Pleas for over a quarter of a century after the Union, till at last the scandal caused by his falling asleep during a murder trial and being unable to give any account of the evidence when called upon for his notes by the Lord-Lieutenant led to his resignation.⁵

¹ *Eng. Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1231-1237.

² *Irish Parl. Reg.* xvii. 16.

³ Cp. Cooke to Clare, Feb. 10, 1801 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 41.

⁴ Barrington, *Personal Reminiscences*, 183.

⁵ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* lvi. 442.

8

The supreme governing body in the country was the Privy Council, in which was vested much more extensive powers than in the similar English institution.¹ In England the Privy Council had been completely superseded as an executive body by the Cabinet, while its departmental activities were delegated to committees and confined exclusively to legal and colonial affairs; as a whole it was convened from time to time simply to give a constitutional *imprimatur* to royal proclamations and decrees which were promulgated by virtue of the Crown prerogative.² English Privy Councillors could not as such claim to sit at the Board in Dublin Castle, a separate and distinct organisation whose inherent authority had not suffered the same diminution as that at St. James's.³ The functions of the Irish Privy Council were more akin to those of a Legislative Council of an imperial dependency at the present day. All important executive acts originating in the country received its approval, and the Lord-Lieutenant could not issue any proclamation or in theory pursue any specific line of policy without having first sought its advice. Government legislation was discussed at its sessions prior to introduction in the House of Commons, and all bills which passed through both Houses of Parliament had to be sealed in council before being despatched to England. (It was at this stage that before 1782 the Irish Privy Council could alter bills or suppress them altogether.) The various branches of the local administration were subject to a large measure of conciliar control. The Board sanctioned the appointments of all borough magistrates, mayors, sovereigns, recorders, etc., it considered petitions and granted licences for bearing arms, it received reports on Church lands and the disposition of glebe, and it supervised all matters relating

¹ Lecky, ii.; Porritt, ii.; J. T. Ball, *Legislative Systems in Ireland*; H. Wood, *Guide to the Public Records of Ireland*, *passim*. A clear statement of the origin, history and working of the Irish Privy Council is much needed. A list of Privy Councillors who were living during the period when Castlereagh was Chief Secretary will be found in Appendix II below, at pp. 449-52; it is extracted from the unpublished Privy Council Roll in Dublin Castle.

² Sir Almeric Fitzroy, *History of the Privy Council*, 209-288.

³ Law Opinion, Aug. 1801: MS. Calendar of Official Papers, 1790-1831 (Public Record Office of Ireland).

to shipping, customs, excise, racecourses, anti-Catholic penal laws, and prisons. One of its most jealously exercised privileges was the right of every member to a certain amount of wine free of duty.¹

The meetings of the Privy Council took place in the great gilded chamber above the archway which connects the two Castle yards. The Lord-Lieutenant presided at the Board, and when absent his place was taken by the Chief Secretary, Lord Chancellor, or Primate or some other councillor in the viceroy's confidence. None of its proceedings were published, and the oath which each member swore on signing the Council roll effectually safeguarded their secrecy. Written records in the shape of minutes, etc., were kept by an official clerk, but as almost all of these prior to the beginning of the nineteenth century have been lost, it is impossible to indicate in any detail the course of this body's executive deliberations.² It is known, however, that long before this time the Council had become so unwieldy in size that the Lord-Lieutenant, who relied upon his Chief Secretary to preserve harmony in its ranks, was in the habit of consulting with a few of its leading members in preference to the whole Board. On account of its exceptional jurisdiction, which was imperfectly understood beyond the Channel, Irish gentlemen were always anxious to be sworn members of it, for membership gave them an exclusive right of audience with the Lord-Lieutenant and opened the door to the advancement of their family and personal interests. Early in the eighteenth century Primate Boulter complained that its bulk impeded the transaction of business, and he expressed fears that further additions might render it immune from viceregal control.³ In 1777 the Lord-Lieutenant wrote that it had grown so numerous 'as to become frequently a scene of debate and more resembling a House of Parliament than a meeting of ministers.'⁴ By 1798 there were over one hundred Privy

¹ Wood, *op. cit.* 194-203.

² With the exception of a few years in the reigns of Edward III, Mary, and Elizabeth, all the Council records before 1805 have been destroyed (either at the burning of the Customs House in 1711 or at that of the Four Courts in 1922). The Council and Minute Books after 1805 are preserved in Dublin Castle.

³ A. Phillips, *Boulter Letters*, ii. 307-8.

⁴ Buckinghamshire to Stanley, April 9, 1777: Buck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 523).

Councillors in Ireland ;¹ and although rarely one-fifth of that number was in the habit of assembling in the Council chamber even when expressly summoned, the Lord-Lieutenant had come to take all important executive decisions on the advice of a few specially favoured Councillors, who thus constituted an inner 'cabinet.'

The reactionary and ultra-Protestant junto known as the Irish Cabinet consisted of the Lord Chancellor (Clare), the Speaker of the House of Commons (Foster), the Archbishop of Cashel (Agar), and the First Commissioner of Revenue (Beresford). By forcing their views upon the Lord-Lieutenant and his Secretary, these men had been the real rulers of the country during the past ten years. Cooke, though not a Privy Councillor, often attended their meetings and was certainly in their confidence. The Attorney-General (Wolfe) and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Parnell) do not appear to have attended unless specially summoned.² The Chief Secretary for the time being usually accompanied the Lord-Lieutenant when the latter consulted this body, but in the case of Pelham and others who spent most of their time in England he was frequently absent. Other members of the administration and even private gentlemen were brought in when occasion demanded their opinions ; for example, Castlereagh was summoned to a meeting in the summer of 1796 when the question of raising yeomanry was being considered, and in response to enquiries he gave his own opinions very freely.³

But even granting that much of the advice which this 'cabinet' offered the Lord-Lieutenant was sound, the harm which it did as a component part of the national government was incalculable. 'The fatal institution of an Irish Cabinet,' as a former viceroy described it,⁴ afforded a conspicuous example of an irresponsible body exercising supreme executive authority. Its members could not be called to account by Parliament in the proper Cabinet spirit, yet they had made it impossible for the Lord-Lieutenant to conduct the government of the country without their assistance ; for if the latter showed himself inclined to dis-

¹ See below, Appendix II.

² Kilwarden to Hardwicke, Jan. 8, 1802 : *Colch. Corr.* i. 341.

³ See above, p. 149.

⁴ Carlisle to Pitt, June 2, 1798 : Pitt MSS. 169.

regard their advice they could paralyse his administration by refusing to support his Chief Secretary in Parliament. Alexander Knox, who had an excellent opportunity of observing their activities, declared that 'the great men of the country had been used to manage everything and to meddle with everything—they were *enfants gâtés*.'¹ Dr. Drennan put the case against them more strongly. 'The grievances of this country,' he said, 'originate from an Irish cabinet concealing and misinterpreting the sentiment of different descriptions of people, and by this means counteracting or defeating the good, or supposed good, intentions of the Sovereign. . . . The rancour and revenge of the Protestant Ascendancy still survives, and the Chancellor, the head of the Irish cabinet, keeps up the venom.'² Their influence over the well-intentioned but vacillating Camden was complete, and they had proposed every repressive measure and unnecessary popular irritant which already characterised that nobleman's vicerealty. As has been seen, they were the direct cause of Fitzwilliam's recall and Abercromby's resignation.³ Unknown to each Lord-Lieutenant they carried on a promiscuous correspondence with their friends in the English Government, and particularly with Lord Auckland, of whose intimacy with Pitt they made the most unscrupulous use.

Unfortunately the danger of permitting 'the military defence of the country to depend upon the tactical dictates of Chancellors, Speakers of the House of Commons, etc.,' was not realised soon enough in England to avert a national catastrophe in Ireland. Lord Carlisle, a former Lord-Lieutenant, only echoed the truth when he informed the Prime Minister on the outbreak of the rebellion that 'we now feel all the bad effects of a power which should never have been conferred and which is strengthened from hence by many acting with you, so as to make it impossible for the Lord-Lieutenant to manage with it or without it.'⁴ Even before he became Chief Secretary, Castlereagh was painfully aware of the inconvenience and embarrassment which it was causing, but both he and Camden felt that in the circumstances

¹ *Colch. Corr.* i. 340.

² Drennan to McTier, July 7, 1793 : *Drennan Letters*, 434.

³ See above, pp. 130, 203.

⁴ Carlisle to Pitt, June 2, 1798 : Pitt MSS. 169 ; cited Ross, 392.

nothing could be done till the supreme civil and military authorities were united under one head. It remained, therefore, for Cornwallis, who came over in June as Commander-in-Chief as well as Lord-Lieutenant, to put an end to such a disgraceful system ;¹ and the permanent disappearance of the Irish Cabinet was lamented only by its members and their immediate supporters in the old and fast-decaying party of Protestant Ascendancy.²

Such was the somewhat chaotic state of the Castle administration when the new Chief Secretary took over his duties. He was not long in discovering the harm which the letters of the ' cabinet ' and their reactionary followers were causing in England. Though he could not suppress this correspondence (one of the principal offenders was actually at the head of the Post Office³), he exerted himself to render its bad effects nugatory. ' Private letters written by persons not altogether dispassionate in their representations,' he tactfully observed to Wickham, ' make it of importance that ministers in England should be enabled to correct as speedily as possible any disadvantageous impression that may be made.'⁴ He therefore established a system of express messengers, by means of which official despatches would be in the hands of English ministers at least twenty-four hours before the public could discover the news which they contained. For this purpose a wherry was always kept in deep water at Dunleary and in immediate readiness to sail.⁵

It was customary for the Lord-Lieutenant to transmit to the Home Secretary accounts of current events in Ireland suitable for publication, adding his personal observations in private letters. The Chief Secretary assisted in the composition of these despatches, which he supplemented from time to time with confidential accounts from his own pen to the Under-Secretaries in Whitehall. When Camden gave place to Cornwallis, Castlereagh found himself obliged to draft all the principal despatches, since

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Aug. 16 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 387.

² Cooke to Auckland, Nov. 2 : Auck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 454).

³ John Lees.

⁴ Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 15, 1798 : H.O. Ireland, 79. Note Wickham's reply (Nov. 26) : ' That kind of private correspondence to which your lordship alludes does mischief more even I am persuaded than you yourself can possibly conceive.'

⁵ Castlereagh to Wickham, May 14, 1799 : H.O. Ireland, 86.

the new Viceroy, who was also Commander-in-Chief, was so much occupied with military affairs as to be able to devote very little attention to his civil office.¹ Hence much of Castlereagh's official correspondence came to be conducted direct with the responsible minister in England.

The link between the Lord-Lieutenant and the Crown was provided by the Secretary of State for the Home (or Southern) Department. This minister instructed the Lord-Lieutenant as to the policy which the Cabinet desired him to pursue, and he was expected to maintain a general supervisory control of Irish affairs. Since 1794 the Home Secretary had been the aristocratic and not illiberal Duke of Portland, who had been Lord-Lieutenant when Grattan secured the 'constitution of '82,' and was even suspected of having written the *Letters of Junius*.² The ill-fated Fox-North coalition had eked out its short and troubled existence under his auspices, so that for the first ten years of Pitt's ministry he was in Opposition. On the outbreak of war with France he had sunk party differences and gone over to the Government side, where he was joined by the more moderate Whigs. As their leader he had in the ministerial reshuffle been assigned a key position in the Cabinet. He was a tolerant man of the world who at heart preferred music to politics, and if he was not conspicuous for his abilities as a departmental chief he at least showed no marked failings. The arbitrary power which he had exercised since 1795 by virtue of the Treason Act and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act had caused surprisingly little popular irritation in England. He could spare very little time for Irish affairs, which he left almost entirely in the hands of his subordinates, though until the 'Fitzwilliam episode' had shocked him into a sense of danger, he had been a strong supporter of Catholic Emancipation.

The principal permanent Under-Secretary in the Home Office was the able diplomatist William Wickham, who had returned from the Continent to take up this position at the beginning of 1798.³ He also acted as Portland's private secretary and he enjoyed the intimate confidence of that minister, for which reason probably he was put in charge of the correspondence relating to Ireland. His almost daily interchange of letters with Castlereagh,

¹ *Corn. Corr.* ii. *passim*. ² *Dict. Nat. Biog.* iv. 302.

³ See above, p. 199, and *Dict. Nat. Biog.* lxi. 177.

in which each undertook to furnish the other with the most unreserved communications and immediately to put him in possession of every impression however unpleasant, constitutes perhaps the most valuable official commentary on Irish political history for the next fifteen months.¹ It was a great disappointment to the Chief Secretary when he was again despatched on a continental mission, and his work passed into the hands of another and less conspicuous official at Whitehall.²

¹ *Cast. Corr.* i., ii.; *Corn. Corr.* ii., iii.; H.O. Ireland, 75-82, 85-89, *passim*.

² Wickham was succeeded by John King in June 1799 : see below, p. 339, and *Corn. Corr.* iii 156, note.

CHAPTER VII

THE REBELLION

I

THE foremost problem which confronted Castlereagh when he undertook the duties of Chief Secretary was how to cope with the ferocious spirit of repression which prevailed everywhere, particularly in the 'cabinet' and among the Castle officials. Some measure of vigour was clearly necessary, but in what degree it was difficult to decide. Abercromby had complained that on his arrival he found the conversation in the fashionable Dublin houses 'betrayed such unrelenting hostility to the people,' and 'such an ardent desire for the most severe measures unrestrained by law and the authority of the civil power,' that he was obliged to withdraw himself altogether from mixed society.¹ 'This is the most wretched country,' he wrote. 'The upper orders have fallen into a lethargy, and are only occupied in eating and drinking or in uttering their unmanly fears. They know that they have been the oppressors of the poor and that the moment of vengeance is at hand. The lower orders rejoice that in their opinion the moment is at hand when they can glut their revenge, and hope for a more equal share of the good things in this life.'² It is instructive to contrast with these remarks the language of the Castle. 'I fear relaxation and too much clemency,' said Cooke. 'The snake must be killed, not *scotched*.'³ Another official wrote: 'I sometimes wish Lord Camden had a little of the devil in his disposition and that he would, as occasions arise, forget that law or the semblance of law exists among us. . . . People are getting impatient, and I own myself one of the number that wish to see, and that soon, prompt punishment of the delinquent.'⁴ Beresford

¹ Dunfermline, *Abercromby*, 80.

² Abercromby to his son, April 1, 1798: Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 127.

³ Cooke to Auckland, March 19: *Auck. Corr.* iii. 393.

⁴ Lees to Auckland, May 1: *Auck. MSS.* (B.M. Add. 34, 454).

staunchly advocated the policy of flogging suspected rebels to obtain information ;¹ and one of his sons converted his riding school in Marlborough Street into an institution for this express purpose.² To steer a middle course between these two conflicting currents of opinion was not easy—for a new-comer to Dublin Castle it was practically impossible.

The arrests of the United Irish leaders, which took place early in March, were not immediately followed up (as they should have been) by a decisive blow at the revolutionary organisation. Pelham's illness and the dispute with the Commander-in-Chief threw the government councils into momentary confusion, Camden vainly temporised and betrayed the most pitiable irresolution, and in the meantime the rebel forces were enabled to recuperate their strength. The appointment of a new Chief Secretary at the end of the month somewhat cleared the air. The Lord-Lieutenant braced himself, and on the day after his nephew entered on his official duties His Excellency called together a large number of the Privy Council in the Castle. The result of their deliberations was the following proclamation³ which was popularly regarded as marking the high-water mark of official tyranny :

‘ By the Lord-Lieutenant and Council of Ireland.

A PROCLAMATION

CAMDEN

Whereas a traitorous conspiracy existing within this Kingdom for the subversion of the authority of His Majesty and the Parliament, and for the destruction of the established Constitution and Government, hath considerably extended itself, and hath broken out into acts of open violence and rebellion.

We have therefore, by and with the advice of His Majesty's Privy Council, issued the most direct and positive orders to the officers commanding His Majesty's Forces, to employ them with the utmost rigour and decision, for the immediate suppression thereof, and also to recover the arms which have been traitorously forced from His Majesty's peaceable and loyal subjects, and to disarm the rebels and all persons disaffected to His Majesty's Government by the most summary and effectual measures.

¹ Beresford to Auckland, May 9 : *Auck. Corr.* iii. 412.

² John Claudius Beresford : Fitzpatrick, *Sham Squire*, 202 ; *Ireland before the Union*, 154.

³ Seward, *Collectanea Politica*, iii. 251.

AND we do hereby strictly charge and command all His Majesty's peaceable and loyal subjects on their allegiance to aid and assist to the utmost of their power His Majesty's forces in the execution of their duty, to whom we have given it strictly in command to afford full protection to them from all acts of violence which shall be attempted against their persons or properties.

Given at the Council Chamber in Dublin, the 30th Day of March, 1798.

Clare C., Char. Cashel, W. Tuam, Drogheda, Ormonde and Ossory, Shannon, Altamont, Clonmell, Ely, Dillon, Pery, Gosford, O'Neill, H. Meath, Castlereagh, Glentworth, Callan, Tyrawly, John Foster, J. Parnell, H. Cavendish, J. Blaquiere, H. Langrishe, Theo. Jones, Jos. Cooper, D. Latouche, James Fitzgerald, R. Ross, Isaac Corry, Lodge Morres.'

Later on the same day Castlereagh in his first official despatch as Chief Secretary transmitted a copy of this proclamation to Abercromby.¹ It will be seen that the accompanying instructions to the Commander-in-Chief ran directly counter to the latter's famous General Orders of February 26, and that Castlereagh was the chosen instrument by which Abercromby was compelled to undo publicly what he had done (as he considered) in the best interests of the army.²

' DUBLIN CASTLE, *March 30, 1798.*

SIR,

I am commanded by His Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant to communicate to you His Excellency's orders that you do forthwith direct the military to act without waiting for directions from the civil magistrates in dispersing any tumultuous unlawful assemblies of persons, threatening the peace of the realm and the safety of the lives and properties of His Majesty's loyal subjects, wheresoever collected.

I have the honour to enclose to you a proclamation which has been issued to-day by the Lord-Lieutenant in Council and am directed to convey to you His Excellency's orders that you do employ the troops under your command in the disturbed districts; particularly in the counties of Kildare, Tipperary, Limerick, Cork, King's County, Queen's County, and Kilkenny; and in such others as shall become disturbed, or appear to you in danger of becoming so, to crush the rebellion in whatever shape it shall shew itself by the most summary

¹ H.O. Ireland, 76; *Cast. Corr.* i. 164. In the version of Castlereagh's given in the *Castlereagh Correspondence* the passage italicised below is omitted.

² See above, pp. 202-203.

military measures, and that you do employ similar means effectually to disarm the rebels ; particularly to recover the arms forcibly and traitorously taken from the well affected inhabitants, and to afford protection to all His Majesty's loyal subjects ; *for effecting which His Excellency invests you with the fullest discretion to act as you find necessary for the above purposes.*

I have the honour to be, etc.,

CASTLEREAGH.'

Army officers were now authorised ' to quarter troops wherever they may judge necessary,' to commandeer horses and carriages, to demand forage and to issue notices (' proclamations ') requiring the civilian population to act conformable to military authority.¹

The inhabitants of particular counties were invited to give up their arms within ten days under pain of large numbers of troops being sent to live at free quarters among them.² On their refusal the counties were put under the Insurrection Act (if they had not already been proclaimed) and regiments were despatched to dragoon them into obedience.

Abercromby's feelings on receiving the Chief Secretary's despatch may easily be imagined. The Commander-in-Chief made no attempt to conceal his dislike of a proclamation which amounted to the exercise of military rule throughout the country, and he talked of ' the late ridiculous farce acted by Lord Camden and his cabinet.' He maintained that martial law ought to be solely confined to those districts which could not be controlled by the civil power, whereas in fact the realm had been declared to be in a state of rebellion ' when the orders of His Excellency might be carried over the whole Kingdom by an orderly dragoon or a writ executed without any difficulty, a few places in the mountains excepted.'³ Castlereagh, who, unlike Abercromby, possessed nearly ten years' intimate experience of the country, informed the Commander that in his opinion little good could now result from making the suggested differentiation, since it was abundantly clear that the rebellious section of the community would not surrender its arms in obedience to any civil authority. True these measures appeared severe, but in the circumstances of the

¹ Castlereagh to Abercromby, April 1 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 168.

² Cp. Notice to the Inhabitants of the County of Kildare : *Cast. Corr.* i. 169.

³ Abercromby to his son, April 23 : Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 110.

country they were not undeserved. As it was they did not go by any means far enough to please the Castle junto, which desired that every political prisoner taken should be forthwith attainted by Act of Parliament and executed.¹ It is significant that one of the rebel leaders in the field subsequently admitted that up to the proclamation of March 30 the process of arming the people for rebellion had gone on smoothly in the south ; he added that it was this proclamation and its accompanying precautions which alone checked it.² Abercromby in his zeal for the improvement of military discipline had under-estimated the extent of the real danger. Had his advice been followed in preference to the Chief Secretary's and the revolutionary forces thus been permitted to gather further momentum, had the United Irish leaders instead of being hurried into a premature rising been left to mature their plans, and had they raised the standard of rebellion three months later than they actually did, at the time of Humbert's invasion, it is more than probable that the movement would have been completely successful, and that Ireland would have been lost, at any rate for a time, to the Empire.

It has been said by a historian who has some claim to be called impartial that the proclamation of March 30 ' opened a scene of horrors hardly surpassed in the modern history of Europe.'³ Free quarters, the triangles, the pitch cap and burning houses were immediately resorted to in those districts whose inhabitants showed any unwillingness to deliver up their arms. If these last moment efforts on the part of the authorities to prevent a general rising in many cases reflect little credit upon those to whom the duty was directly entrusted, it should not be forgotten that in a country which was on the verge of revolution and in constant danger of foreign invasion, where scarcely a day passed without the murder of a magistrate or the seduction of a soldier, where pikes were being turned out by the score from every blacksmith's anvil, no body of troops could be expected to behave with consummate kindness ; least of all imperfectly disciplined militiamen and yeomanry when sent among a people who cordially hated them. That a number of individuals who were perfectly innocent

¹ Cooke to Auckland, March 19 : *Auck. Corr.* iii. 393.

² *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, i. 21 (ed. Stephen Gwynn).

³ Lecky, iv. 265.

figured among the sufferers during the weeks immediately following the proclamation was inevitable from the nature of the conspiracy.

'This rebellion with which the country has to do,' Castlereagh observed to the House of Commons on May 2, 'is not of that kind which may be met in open day—it avails itself in cowardly security of the principles and the dagger of the assassin. Were those engaged in it to appear with the boldness of men who venture themselves in a cause which they believe to be good, the power and loyalty of the country would crush it in a single day and the people would again be sent back to industry and peace. But as it stood, it became necessary to resort to a system which shall find out the traitors. Where these are known they only would suffer. But when men from weakness or fear suffer themselves to mix with the guilty without avowing their detestation of them they must abide the consequences of their conduct. Nor can such men expect to enjoy the benefit of protection as they whose characters are better ascertained. Let them separate themselves and they will be safe.'¹ For the military excesses which had commenced before he took over Pelham's office, Castlereagh, though he has earned the sobriquet of 'Bloody,' can in no way be held responsible. Indeed, as will be seen later when examining the charges of cruelty that have been brought against him, he did everything in his power to stem the tide of bloodshed. He stated publicly that every complaint of military licence would receive his immediate attention, and redress would be afforded where the injured had merited it. At the same time he issued peremptory orders that the system of free quarters which formed the chief source of abuse should be discontinued, and that no courts-martial for the trial of either civil or military offenders should sit except under the directions of the Commander-in-Chief.² But even these precautions could not prevent the commission of many excesses in a country so wild and possessing such faulty methods of communication as Ireland. Unfortunately an ignorant and irrational peasantry attributed the wanton outrage of the drunken yeoman and the Orange magistrate in the bogs

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, May 7. This description would apply with equal justice to the Civil War of 1920-23. See below, p. 418.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, May 7. Castlereagh to Lake, April 25 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 189. Castlereagh to Abercromby, April 1 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 169.

and cabins of Tipperary and Queen's County to the express orders of the Chief Secretary.

From the moment he took office Castlereagh threw himself heart and soul into the task of providing an adequate national defence against the possibility of a French invasion as well as an internal rising. The War Office could spare him no more regular troops, so that he had to be content with several regiments of Hessian mercenaries 'to be used in the capacity of riflemen.'¹ ('Is this to take off the officers of the enemy?' enquired Drennan contemptuously. 'I did not know that this was according to the European law of war.') Engineers were despatched to Cork, Waterford and Limerick to repair the works, and the Chief Secretary personally supervised their activities in Dublin.² Some doubt existed at first as to where the Government should transact official business in the event of the rebels securing possession of the metropolis. Abercromby's opinion decided the matter. 'Dublin Castle, considered as the seat of Government, is as secure as any place in or near Dublin,' said the Commander-in-Chief. 'When it is no longer tenable, the Chief Governor, his Council and his cabinet must follow the army.'³ Castlereagh was determined that there should be no latter contingency. At the same time he ordered a thorough overhaul of the provisions, ammunition and other equipment of the troops. Discipline was also looked to with good effect. 'Everything goes on quietly,' reported a General in response to these instructions, 'but we have been obliged to destroy a large quantity of whiskey, without which the troops would have got drunk and done much mischief.'⁴ Nor was Trinity College forgotten. Lord Chancellor Clare conducted a visitation of the University, and having delivered an edifying homily on morality and religion he expelled nineteen students, including young Robert Emmet.⁵ Castlereagh's industry did not escape public recognition. Within a

¹ Drennan to McTier, April 24: *Drennan Letters*, 709. According to the Army Returns for 1798 (cited by Dr. D. A. Chart in *Eng. Hist. Rev.* xxxii. at p. 507) there were less than 2,000 regular troops in Ireland at this time.

² *Cast. Corr.* i. 178-197.

³ Abercromby to Castlereagh, April 18: *Cast. Corr.* i. 186.

⁴ R. Dundas to Abercromby, April 23: *Cast. Corr.* i. 188.

⁵ Drennan to McTier, April 23: *Drennan Letters*, 706. *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xvii. 362.

few weeks of his appointment as Chief Secretary the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Dublin voted him the freedom of the city. This was presented 'in a silver box value five guineas,' and marked in an appropriate inscription 'the high esteem which they entertain for the wisdom, the talents, and the patriotism which he has uniformly displayed both in the Cabinet and Senate.'¹ A little later Trinity College gave him an honorary degree.² But these distinctions marked only the beginning of his principal work in Ireland.

2

After the captures at Bond's house on March 12, the supreme United Irish Directory was reconstructed. The most prominent members of the new organisation were Michael Byrne, a bookseller; William Lawless, a young adventurer in his twenties; and two brothers called Sheares. The latter, who had hitherto played a subordinate part in the conspiracy, were sons of a Cork banker and member of Parliament, and strangely enough were destined to suffer under a Treason Act which their father had introduced in the House of Commons.³ Henry Sheares, the elder, was an amiable but weak character, a coward at heart and entirely under the influence of his younger brother. That he was not, however, without talents and a considerable charm of manner may be gathered from the fact that he had wooed and won a lady for whose hand Lord Chancellor Clare had been a serious rival. John, the younger, was a much more dangerous type, a fanatic of undoubted ability, who seems to have favoured the methods of the Assassination Committee. He had been present at the execution of Louis XVI, attracted, so he said, 'by the love of the cause.'⁴ Yet his opinions were as unstable as his manner was theatrical; for having previously visited the Petit Trianon which the late Queen of France had constructed at Versailles, he had professed himself 'so enchanted with the taste of a person who could conceive so beautiful a retreat, that he fell on his knees and

¹ Easter Assembly, April 20, 1798: *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, xv. 43, 50. Londonderry, 16.

² LL.D. Received by Diploma, Aug. 1, 1798: G. D. Burtchaell and T. U. Sadleir, *Alumni Dubliniensis*, 783.

³ Fitzpatrick, *Secret Service under Pitt*, 308.

⁴ Madden, iv. 208 (2nd ed.).

swore he would plunge a dagger in the heart of every Frenchman he met, if a hair of her head were touched.'¹ But whatever the demerits of these two men they were both indefatigable workers in the revolutionary movement, and in spite of numerous obstacles they succeeded almost to the last in keeping secret from the authorities their plans for a general rising. It was not till within a few days of the pre-arranged date of the rising that Castlereagh accidentally discovered the details of the preparations and took the necessary steps to frustrate them.

The information which put the Government on its guard came from a Captain in the King's County Militia, named John Warneford Armstrong. This officer had been in the habit of visiting Byrne's bookshop in Grafton Street, which was the literary headquarters of the United Irishmen ; and, though not in sympathy with them, he used out of curiosity to buy the republican works of the day as they appeared. One day towards the middle of May the proprietor happened to see him in the shop, and thought he would try to seduce an officer in a militia regiment already noted for its disaffection. Having engaged him in friendly conversation and drawn him out satisfactorily, Byrne offered to introduce him to the Sheares's. After some hours of hesitation, during which period he sought the advice of a fellow-officer, Armstrong agreed to this proposal, and on the same day he met the two brothers. A little later he repeated his visit, and this time made the acquaintance of Lawless. The conspirators appear to have opened their minds freely to him, for he learned at some length of the proposed insurrection in the city, and also of a project to seize the military camp at Chapelizod. Meanwhile he communicated the substance of these discoveries to his commanding officer. The latter was so alarmed that he immediately conducted Armstrong to the Castle, where the information was repeated for the benefit of the Chief Secretary.²

Armstrong told the minister that he had been invited to dine with the Sheares's and other conspirators at Byrne's house on Sunday, May 20, when the final arrangements for seizing the

¹ Henry Yorke to Wickham, Aug. 3 ; Wickham to Castlereagh, Aug. 10 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 257-259.

² Information of Captain J. W. Armstrong to Lord Castlereagh, May 17 : H.O. Ireland, 76.

chief points of vantage in the city and its neighbourhood were to be discussed. Castlereagh advised him to accept an invitation which the gravity of the political situation demanded, and Armstrong accordingly did so. He was not, however, instigated by the Chief Secretary to insinuate himself artfully into the good graces of his hosts, as one writer has suggested; nor did he, in fact, when he went, fondle the infant children of Henry Sheares on his knee.¹ In consequence of the Sheares's statement at the dinner that 'it was necessary to make an insurrection immediately and . . . the country complained that they would hold out no longer if they were not supported by Dublin,' the leaders decided that the rising in the city should take place on the next day or that following. Their plan was to besiege the Castle, attack the houses of the more objectionable Privy Councillors (particularly the Chancellor's), liberate the prisoners from all the gaols, and effectually cut off communications with the Barracks by taking possession of the quays. Armstrong was assured that the country was 'secured' within a fourteen-mile radius of the capital.²

On leaving Byrne's, Armstrong lost no time in forwarding this vital information to the Chief Secretary. A 'cabinet' was hastily summoned in the Castle, and warrants for the arrest of the Sheares's and the other principals were immediately issued.³ The two unfortunate brothers were taken next morning and lodged in Newgate, whither Byrne and Neilson shortly followed. Lawless managed to escape to France, where he was eventually to become one of Napoleon's generals.⁴ Lord Edward Fitzgerald was already in custody. His capture had been effected two days previously by Major Sirr and two other police officers, though not without a severe struggle.

The romantic figure who was to lead the rebel forces in the field had since his disappearance on March 12 been flitting from one hiding-place to another with a price on his head, having proudly refused to embrace the opportunity of leaving the country

¹ Madden, iv. 257 (2nd ed.). Cp. Armstrong's evidence at the Sheares's trial: Madden, iv. 344.

² Information of Colonel L'Estrange to the Lord-Lieutenant, May 20: H.O. Ireland, 76.

³ Beresford to Auckland, May 20: *Auck. Corr.* iii. 417.

⁴ Lecky, iv. 316.

which the Government had graciously provided him. His downfall, like that of so many of his compatriots, was the work of a paid informer.¹ 'A thousand pounds reward was offered for apprehending him,' wrote Bishop Percy,² who was in Dublin at this time. 'This led to a discovery, and on Saturday night at 9 o'clock he was taken in a house in Thomas Street in bed. The officers who entered the room told him it was in vain to resist, and therefore hoped he would not put them to the necessity of using violence. He seemed to now assent and put his hand upon his breast, but it was to feel a dagger or stiletto of a very elaborate workmanship, and then like a tiger flew upon them and fell to stabbing them in a shocking manner till one of them discharged a pistol with two bullets, which wounding his right arm disabled him.'³ He was carried in a sedan-chair to the Castle, where the Chief Secretary saw him. A messenger was immediately despatched to convey the news of the arrest to the Lord-Lieutenant, who was at the play. In an adjoining box Lady Castlereagh was entertaining a party, which included a number of Lord Edward's relations. One of these, Miss Louisa Napier, was so overcome on hearing the dreadful news that her hostess was obliged to lead her out of the theatre; and together they went to comfort the unfortunate Lady Pamela, who was then in Moira

¹ Castlereagh is not recorded as having ever mentioned how the information which led to Lord Edward Fitzgerald's arrest was obtained, or from whom; though he must have known by reason of his intimacy with Cooke. 'Whenever any inquisitive student of the stormy period of '98 had the courage to ask Major Sirr to tell the name of Lord Edward's betrayer, the Major invariably drew forth his ponderous snuff-box, inhaled a prodigious pinch, and solemnly turned the conversation': W. J. Fitzpatrick, *A Note to the Cornwallis Papers*, 83. This writer has proved conclusively that the information was communicated to Cooke by Francis Higgins (the 'Sham Squire'), who had in turn obtained it from an obscure Catholic barrister named Magan. Lecky endorses Fitzpatrick's findings (*Hist.* iv. 293-309).

² Thomas Percy (1729-1811). Editor of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and Bishop of Dromore, County Down. I have made use of a number of valuable letters to his wife which are preserved in the British Museum (Additional MSS. 32, 335). See Alice C. C. Gaussen, *Percy: Prelate and Poet* (London 1908).

³ Bishop Percy to his wife, May 21: Percy MSS. The most faithful description of the arrest will be found in *Cast. Corr.* i. 457-468 (Appendix), which contains the account communicated to his son by Captain Ryan, the officer who died as a result of the encounter. See also Castlereagh to Wickham, May 20: *Cast. Corr.* i. 208; and Beresford to Auckland, May 20: *Auck. Corr.* iii. 413.

House.¹ Meanwhile the prisoner had been lodged in Newgate, where his wound proved more serious than was at first supposed. The inflammation produced a delirium from which he never recovered, and he was thus saved the ignominy of a public execution. 'His death, it is probable,' wrote Castlereagh on its occurrence a few weeks later, 'will be of more service than if he had lived. His partisans would have retained the hope of rescuing him.'²

The Chief Secretary has been accused of showing heartlessness to the dead man's immediate relations,³ but this charge does not square with Lady Louisa Conolly's account of 'dear Lord Castlereagh's distress about all this business.'⁴ If he could prevent neither the exile of Lady Pamela nor the passage of a bill of attainder against her late husband, Castlereagh at least arranged for the peaceful departure of the former by silencing the press as to her movements; and by inserting a special clause in the bill of attainder he ensured the uninterrupted descent of the honours and property of the Leinster family to Lord Robert Fitzgerald.⁵

3

On the day of the arrest of the brothers Sheares, Castlereagh, acting on the Lord-Lieutenant's instructions, despatched a public letter to the Lord Mayor of Dublin informing him of the proposed rising. The Mayor's co-operation was sought in 'preserving tranquillity within the bounds of the metropolis,' searching for arms, and adopting 'such measures of general precaution as shall appear best calculated to defeat the designs of the rebellious against the King's Government and our invaluable Constitution.'⁶

¹ Lady Louisa Conolly to W. Ogilvie, May 21: Moore, *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, ii. 95.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, June 4: H.O. Ireland, 81. This letter contains some interesting details of his last days. Cp. the report of his medical attendant Dr. J. A. Garnett: Sir C. P. Cameron, *History of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland*, 345-354 (ed. 1886).

³ Notably by Lady Sarah Napier (Lady Louisa Conolly's sister). See Lady Sarah Napier to the Duke of Richmond, Aug. 26: Moore, *op. cit.* 232.

⁴ Lady Louisa Conolly to W. Ogilvie, June 1: Moore, *op. cit.* ii. 112.

⁵ Castlereagh to Wickham, Aug. 14: H.O. Ireland, 78. The attainder was reversed in 1819.

⁶ Castlereagh to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, May 21: Seward, iii. 238, and contemporary newspapers and placards.

On the following day the Chief Secretary made a similar announcement before a packed House of Commons. He outlined the progress of the conspiracy in singularly graphic language, which brought home to every member of that assembly the magnitude of the crisis, and he asked for the speedy passage of any measures which Government might introduce to meet the emergency. 'Had not the internal plot been so fortunately discovered,' he said, 'the capital of Ireland would now have been flowing with the blood of its inhabitants.' It was a painful but necessary reflection. The House responded by immediately voting an address of loyalty to the Viceroy, and Dublin enjoyed the edifying spectacle of all the members led by the Speaker and Sergeant-at-Arms walking on foot to the Castle with it.¹

Meanwhile the Lord Mayor had directed bodies of yeomanry to conduct a strict search for arms throughout the city, and their summary enquiries were not unsuccessful.² 'It is surprising what quantities of arms of all kinds have been detected,' observed Beresford: 'the quantities of pikes are prodigious, but scarcely any are produced without acts of violence. Numbers have been flogged who have been caught with pikes, and all but one have peached and discovered. I have seen none of the flogging, but it is terrible to hear the perseverance of these madmen. Some have received 300 lashes before they would discover where the pikes were concealed. The extent of the conspiracy is amazing. Many people on being terrified by the appearance of triangles and cat o' nine tails have discovered and peached their brother committee men. All the gaols are full.'³ Under Castlereagh's orders military detachments patrolled the streets and guarded all important positions and means of communication. The rebel forces were thus completely disorganised within the capital, and the popular expectation that every servant would rise up and murder his master as he slept was defeated. Indeed the lamp-lighters refused to perform their duties of illumination, 'the better to favour these deeds of darkness,' as Bishop Percy aptly remarked; but even this move was of short effect, for 'about

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, May 25-29. *H. of C. Journals*, xvii. 333.

² Camden to Portland, May 23: H.O. Ireland, 76.

³ Beresford to Auckland, May 23: Auck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 454).

midnight the loyal yeomen were driving them through the city with a bayonet in their breech to compel them to light the lamps.' ¹

The signal for the rising in the provinces was to be the seizure of the mails from Dublin. On the night of May 23 four mail-coaches were held up and robbed, while numerous bands of rebels speedily assembled in the adjacent counties. Strict martial law was immediately proclaimed throughout the Kingdom, and Parliament did not hesitate to sanction the act of the Privy Council which put it in force.² 'The sword is drawn,' wrote Camden more in sorrow than anger. 'I have kept it within the scabbard as long as possible. It must not now be returned until this most alarming conspiracy is put down.'³ One member of the House of Commons in an excess of loyal zeal suggested that the proclamation should be retrospective—in other words, that all persons already in custody and charged with high treason should be tried by military courts and executed as quickly as possible so that the disaffected might no longer look to them for future counsel. When he stated his desire to move an amendment to this effect, his words were greeted with applause and shouts of 'Move!' 'Move!' Fortunately Castlereagh intervened at this moment, and the inhuman proposal was abandoned. The minister most earnestly implored honourable members not to suffer the warmth of their feelings on this occasion to run away with their understanding, by calling on the Lord Lieutenant for a measure which must expose his councils to a charge of cruelty. 'If the exigency of the times require the exemplary punishment of particular criminals,' he told them, 'it should be left for the discretion of Government to select them, and not by a general and indiscriminating severity punish all men implicated who were now in the power of the laws and for whose trials there is no immediate necessity of stepping out of the ordinary course.' 'Though it is necessary to punish with the utmost severity rebels found in arms,' he added, 'it would not be wise to close the door of mercy against the deluded inhabitants of Ireland desirous of returning to their loyalty, whom the Government would be happy to embrace in the

¹ Percy to his wife, May 23 : Percy MSS. (B.M. Add. 32, 335).

² May 24 : Faulkner's *Dublin Journal*, May 26.

³ Camden to Portland, May 24 : H.O. Ireland, 76.

arms of paternal affection.’¹ It was useless for Beresford and his bloodthirsty friends to grumble at this declaration.² The Chief Secretary was seemingly determined to deny them a pogrom.

The events of the next six weeks have been but too frequently described, and with a wealth of detailed and grotesque exaggeration on the part of most native historians. The catalogue of official barbarities has been represented as endless. It is sufficient to quote one illustration. A day or two after the rebellion had broken out, a number of dead pikemen taken at Santry were brought in a cart to Dublin. Barrington, who happened to witness their arrival, loses no opportunity in telling his readers of the ‘new disgusting and horrid scene’ which was ‘publicly exhibited’ when they reached their destination. ‘The carcases were stretched out in the Castle Yard, where the Viceroy then resided, and in full view of the Secretary’s windows: they lay on the pavement as trophies of the first skirmish, cut and gashed in every part, covered with clotted blood and dust, the most frightful spectacle which ever disgraced a royal residence save the seraglio.’³

Without entering much deeper into this literary chamber of horrors, the precise nature of the rebellion may be more accurately gathered from Castlereagh’s correspondence with the English ministers. ‘It is a Jacobinical conspiracy throughout the Kingdom, pursuing its objects chiefly with Popish instruments,’ he wrote three weeks later; ‘the heated bigotry of this sect being better suited to the purpose of the republican leaders than the cold reasoning disaffection of the northern Presbyterians.’

¹ These remarks were reproduced in a leading English newspaper together with the following comments: ‘The dignified speech of LORD CASTLEREAGH will be read with pleasure by every friend of humanity, as it will prove to the confusion of the most unqualified supporters of anarchy that the Government of Ireland, so far from wishing to act with a severity which the imperious necessity of the moment would certainly justify, have on the contrary adopted a lenity of proceeding that is perfectly conformable to the mildest spirit of the Constitution in the most tranquil times; while they proceed with wisdom to the condign punishment of those traitors who, taken with arms in their hands against their King and country, have subjected themselves to the operation of speedy and exemplary justice.’—*The Times*, May 30, 1798.

² Beresford to Auckland, May 30: *Auck. Corr.* 433.

³ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 216. According to Barrington one of the carcases which showed signs of animation was successfully revived, and received a pardon from the Lord-Lieutenant.

Sectarian animosity appeared keenest in the County of Wexford, where a body of Orange bashi-bazouks officially known as the North Cork Militia was let loose upon the people. It was in this neighbourhood, too, that the insurgents met with their greatest successes. 'It is a perfect religious phrensy,' said Castlereagh. 'The priests lead the rebels to battle : on their march they kneel down and pray and show the most desperate resolution in their attacks. . . . They put such Protestants as are reputed to be Orangemen to death, saving others on condition of their embracing the Catholic faith.'¹ In a skirmish between Arklow and Gorey a priest was reported to have been killed on the field of battle in his vestments.² Castlereagh quickly realised that the rebel forces were much more numerous than was generally thought—in Wexford alone there were over 10,000 in arms—and he strongly urged the despatch of proper and adequate military reinforcements from England.³ Pelham had recovered sufficiently to be enabled to leave Ireland before the storm burst ; and as he enjoyed a comfortable convalescence among the turnip fields at Stanmer, Castlereagh kept him regularly posted with the progress of events on his side of the Channel.⁴ If the invalid had underestimated the extent of the rising, his impression was soon corrected by his deputy in Dublin Castle. 'I understand from Marshall that you are rather inclined to hold the insurrection cheap,' Castlereagh wrote to him early in June. 'Rely upon it there never was in any country so formidable an insurrection on the part of the people. It may not disclose itself in the full extent of its preparation if it is not early met with vigour and success, but our force cannot cope in a variety of distant points with an enemy that can elude attack where it is inexpedient to risk a contest.'⁵

Castlereagh's anxiety was increased by the news that a fleet, which Napoleon had been busy assembling during the earlier part of the year, had recently sailed out of Toulon into the Mediter-

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, June 12 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 219.

² Elliot to Pelham, June 3 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 105).

³ Castlereagh to Elliot, June 15 : Pelham MSS.

⁴ Castlereagh's letters to Pelham during the summer and autumn of 1798 are in the British Museum (Additional MSS. 33, 105-33, 106, *passim*). Some of them have been printed by the late Sir J. T. Gilbert in his *Documents Relating to Ireland, 1795-1804*.

⁵ Castlereagh to Pelham, June 8 : Pelham MSS. ; Gilbert, 132.

ranear.¹ For a while grave fears were entertained that its destination was Ireland; and it was not discovered till considerably later that it might have been that the French general and his ships were bound for the East with a pleasing reversion to the imperial programme of Alexander the Great and Mark Antony. Since Wickham had withdrawn from the Continent the standard of intelligence in the English Secret Service showed a marked decline, for with very little trouble the object of this mission might have been revealed through one of Barras's mistresses or an official in any of the French ports.² However, the greater fault lay with France. In allowing himself to be side-tracked in the pursuit of glory, Napoleon missed a rare chance of striking a mortal blow at the one really weak spot in the British armour. Instead of throwing all his available forces into Ireland, he merely permitted the launching of a few isolated expeditions so as to form a cloak for his own grandiose scheme in Egypt. Too late he realised his mistake. Years afterwards when suffering the loneliness of St. Helena he confessed to a friend: 'If instead of the expedition to Egypt I had undertaken one against Ireland, what would England have been to-day? And the Continent? And the political world?'³ Perhaps at that moment he was thinking too of what French diplomacy still considers as the *chef d'œuvre* of its dreams—a United States of Europe.⁴

That the rebel leaders in the north hesitated at first, and did not immediately throw in their lot with the Dublin directory and so make the rising general, was largely due to the local disinclination to move without foreign assistance. In the end only two counties stirred, and the pikemen, though gallantly led by Henry Joy McCracken and Henry Munro, were easily cut down and scattered over the flax fields of Antrim and Down. Their plans had been communicated to Castlereagh through an informer in plenty of time for General Nugent, who commanded the regular troops in Ulster, to make adequate preparations for meeting them.⁵

¹ Cp. Secret Information respecting hostile preparations in French ports, Feb. 5-March 16: *Cast. Corr.* i. 165-68.

² J. H. Rose, *Pitt and the Great War*, 356.

³ Las Casas, *Mémoires de Sainte Hélène*, ii. 335 (ed. 1823).

⁴ Bradley, 241.

⁵ Castlereagh to Wickham, June 22: H.O. Ireland, 76. The informer was Nicholas Magean of Saintfield: see above, p. 186, note 4.

For a short time, however, they were in possession of Newtownards and the surrounding district, and six of Londonderry's children who were at Mount Stewart barely succeeded in making good their escape before the insurgents reached the house.¹ This success was shortlived, for the estate was evacuated a few days later in order to launch a concerted attack upon the loyalist stronghold of Ballynahinch. The consequent engagement on June 13 put a period to the rebellion in County Down. 'The rebels fought at Ballynahinch, as in Wexford, with determined bravery,' wrote Castlereagh, 'but without the fanaticism of the southerns.' 'They made the attack and used some wretched ship guns mounted on cars with considerable address. The body there assembled was entirely dispersed. In their ranks were found two of my father's servants, a footman and a postillion.'² Nugent and his second-in-command, Clavering, now issued amnesties to all rebels, except their leaders, who would lay down their arms and return to their allegiance. The people took the hint, and with the capture and execution of McCracken and Munro shortly afterwards the rising in Ulster was over.

Nor did their southern friends fare better. On June 5 the Wexford rebels were decisively defeated at New Ross and their leader, Bagenal Harvey, who was oddly enough a Protestant gentleman turned traitor, shared the fate of the others. A fortnight later the *coup de grâce* was administered by Lake on Vinegar Hill. Hitherto no quarter had been given on either side; but on this occasion an indiscriminate slaughter was prevented by the failure of Lake's principal subordinate, Needham, to present himself with his division until half an hour after the battle was over, thereby enabling many rebels to get away unhurt and earning for himself the celebrated nickname of 'the late General Needham.'³ 'I consider the rebels as now in your power,' wrote Castlereagh when congratulating Lake on his victory, 'and I feel assured that your treatment of them will be such as shall make them sensible of their crimes as well as the authority of Government. It would be unwise and contrary, I know, to your own feelings to drive the wretched people, who are mere instruments

¹ See above, pp. 30-31.

² Castlereagh to Elliot, June 15: Pelham MSS.; Gilbert, 135.

³ T. De Quincey, *Works*, i. 243 (ed. Masson).

in the hands of the more wicked, to despair. The leaders are just objects of punishment ; and the situation of the rebel army such that you may fairly make the terms you give them rather an act of voluntary clemency than conditions extorted by the rebels with any prospect on their part of successful resistance.' ¹

4

The situation was therefore well in hand towards the end of June when Cornwallis arrived in Dublin to take command of the army and supersede the heartsick Camden as viceroy.² For over a year Camden had been urging the English Government to unite the offices of Lord-Lieutenant and Commander-in-Chief, and had himself pressed Cornwallis to come over for this purpose.³ He now reiterated this advice to Pitt, adding that Lake was unequal to the emergency.⁴ With characteristic procrastination the decision had not been taken till the danger was almost past. It was Camden himself who brought matters to a head. On the outbreak of the rebellion reinforcements had been promised from the War Office, and their failure to arrive within the next three weeks served the Lord-Lieutenant with an excuse for declaring his inability to remain at his post any longer. Even Castlereagh could not repress his annoyance at such neglect, but he did not despair like his uncle. 'The delay attending the arrival of the reinforcements is unfortunate,' he said, 'not merely as cramping our operations, but as affording a moral, which the disaffected do not fail to reason from, that with French assistance the people could have carried the country before a regiment from the other side found its way to our assistance.'⁵ At length, 8,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry were despatched to the theatre of war, much to the disgust of the King, who considered that the withdrawal of such a large number of troops from 'active service' was quite unnecessary.⁶

¹ Castlereagh to Lake, June 22 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 223.

² Cornwallis to Portland, June 21 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 354.

³ Camden to Cornwallis, May 23, 1797 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 327. Camden to Pitt, June 1797 : Pitt MSS. 326.

⁴ Camden to Pitt, June 6, 1798 : Pitt MS. 326. Pitt to Liverpool, June 12 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 352.

⁵ Castlereagh to Elliot, June 15 : Pelham MSS. ; Gilbert, 135.

⁶ Wickham to Castlereagh, June 8 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 215. Rose, *Pitt and the Great War*, 358.

Camden had long been weary of his work. In a letter to Pitt written as early as the autumn of 1796 he admitted that he was looking forward to the time when they should both be private gentlemen again and he might enjoy the Prime Minister's 'unreserved friendship' on their estates in Kent.¹ The position of any viceroy who followed Fitzwilliam must from the circumstances have been unenviable; and though Camden had set out from London with a pretence of light-heartedness and confidence, he knew that the decided line of policy which he had been instructed to pursue was bound to provoke national opposition. Nor was he mistaken. His arrival in Ireland was greeted with a riot and his departure with a rebellion. During his residence in the country it was inevitable that he should rely principally for guidance upon the Protestant Ascendancy Party. The misfortune both for the country and himself was that this party was reactionary to a man. 'Lord Camden was, in truth, the victim of the passions and violence of his advisers; he had good intentions but was of infirm purpose, and did not possess the courage to assert or even to assist what he felt to be right.'² Political bewilderment was succeeded by domestic panic. His private affairs became as embarrassed as those of his office, but he lived on in Phoenix Park and came to town with conscientious regularity to attend the Privy Council. When the crisis came in May, he sent his wife and children to England, and prepared for the worst, which he felt was not far off. A few days after the outbreak of the rebellion he again wrote to Pitt: 'You may easily conceive the violence of my friends when I tell you that, though I suppose I stood yesterday more highly with them and with the country than any man, an appearance of wishing to avail myself of an opportunity not to exclude the possibility of a speedy return to peace and *no more* has made me now the most unpopular man in Ireland.'³

If he proved a weak man in times of stress, Camden was neither a cruel nor an unkind one; and he was certainly far from filling the rôle of agent-provocateur-in-chief of disaffection which popular fancy has so frequently assigned to him. He cannot,

¹ Camden to Pitt, Nov. 16, 1796: Pitt MSS. 326.

² Dunfermline, *op. cit.* 89.

³ Camden to Pitt, May 29: Pitt MSS. 326.

however, be acquitted of all responsibility for the numerous acts of military licence and injustice which, though committed without his knowledge, took place during his administration, and might well have been prevented or at least diminished in extent, had he not permitted the army to become a tool in the hands of a faction. Since Castlereagh's appointment as his Chief Secretary some relaxation in the severities of martial law had taken place; nevertheless one of the first official acts of Cornwallis was to issue 'the most positive orders against the infliction of punishment under any pretence whatever, not authorised by the orders of a General Officer in pursuance of a sentence of a general Court Martial.'¹

Lord Cornwallis was an army veteran of some sixty summers, whose many successful campaigns had been overshadowed by the humiliating surrender at Yorktown of the British forces under his command in North America. He had but recently returned from India to receive a Marquessate for his services in consolidating imperial authority in the East; for he had already behaved as a humane and enlightened administrator in Calcutta, and he was considered to be the ablest general in the army.² As the official bearer of the olive branch from London, he was viewed with immediate disfavour by the Beresford party; and when on his arrival in Dublin he refused to consult with the 'cabinet' and totally set aside this unconstitutional body which, as he said, 'Lord Castlereagh told me was very inconvenient and embarrassing to Lord Camden,' the lukewarm feelings of the ultra-loyal towards the new viceroy turned to intense hatred.³ His Excellency was perhaps inclined to jump to conclusions with indecent haste, but it must be admitted that the strictures which he lost no time in passing upon the old set of government advisers and the behaviour of the militia and yeomanry forces were by no means unmerited. He had not been in Ireland many days before he wrote to the English Secretary of State: 'The violence of our friends and their folly in endeavouring to make it a religious war, added to the ferocity of our troops who delight in murder, most

¹ Castlereagh to General Sir James Steuart, June 25: *Corn. Corr.* ii. 355.

² *Dict. Nat. Biog.* iii. 234.

³ Cornwallis to Ross, Aug. 16: *Corn. Corr.* ii. 387. Cooke to Auckland, Nov. 2: Auck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 454).

powerfully counteract all plans for conciliation.’¹ Though possessed of considerably greater force of character than his predecessor, he was soon as weary of his situation as Camden had been, and on more than one occasion he sincerely wished himself back in Bengal.² ‘The conversation of the principal persons of the country all tend to encourage this system of blood,’ he reported a little later, ‘and the conversation at my table; where you will suppose I do all I can to prevent it, always turns on hanging, shooting, burning, etc., etc., and if a priest has been put to death the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company.’³

The different system which Cornwallis introduced speedily took effect. ‘That he is a man of firmness,’ remarked Charlemont, ‘evidently appears in the cross and disappointed countenances of many who lately smiled, or rather like Milton’s *Death*, *grinned horrible a ghastly smile*.’⁴ Such a welcome change also gained the enthusiastic support of the acting Chief Secretary, whose services the new Lord-Lieutenant retained and to whom he early acknowledged his obligations. ‘I have every reason,’ Cornwallis wrote after a few weeks in Dublin, ‘to be highly satisfied with Lord Castlereagh, who is really a very uncommon young man, and possesses talents, temper, and judgment suited to the highest stations, without prejudices or any views that are not directed to the general benefit of the British Empire.’⁵

Although the rebellion had now been practically suppressed, there were still numerous small bodies of rebels in arms. These consisted of roving bands, who issued periodically from the bogs and mountains to obtain recruits, burning houses and murdering the inhabitants who would not join them. They naturally met with no quarter from any of the opposing forces with whom they might be unfortunate enough to fall in. As the most effective method of putting an end to these unpleasant hostilities Cornwallis proposed to issue a general pardon to all those still in arms against the King who would surrender themselves and their weapons within fourteen days, only leaders and such as were

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, July 1 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 357.

² Cornwallis to Ross, July 9 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 363.

³ Cornwallis to Ross, July 24 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 371.

⁴ Charlemont to Haliday, July 30 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 328.

⁵ Cornwallis to Ross, July 9 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 363.

guilty of cool and deliberate murder excepted.¹ As Castlereagh expressed it, the earnest wish of the Lord-Lieutenant and himself was that 'the principle of pardon should be pushed as far as may be at all compatible with the public safety.'² Unfortunately a number of additional exceptions to the amnesty were forced upon Cornwallis from Whitehall, and these robbed it of some of the more merciful features in its original form.³ Many individual pardons were, however, subsequently granted to persons who would otherwise have been affected. The great merit of the amnesty was that it was issued *pending the rebellion*, and not, as was usually the case with such acts of official grace, after its termination. 'The principal object in view,' said Castlereagh, 'has been the quieting of the minds of those who had been engaged in the treason. In the present case the Rebellion, though crushed in a military sense, is yet in organised force; and in many parts of the Kingdom disturbances still exist, and the people retain their arms with an obstinacy that indicates the cause is not yet abandoned.'⁴

Castlereagh's announcement of the amnesty in the House of Commons on July 17 was gratefully received throughout the country, except by the Castle clique and a few bigoted Orangemen.⁵ Charlemont had still sufficient strength left to tell his friend the doctor that this occasion was the only pleasing day he had seen in Parliament for a long time past. 'The message was then delivered, the purport of which I am sure you will approve, even though it should prevent the further ornamenting of your public buildings.'⁶ Haliday, who had sadly pursued his calling in Belfast during the rebellion, welcomed this news, and in his reply he described with pardonable irony the return to normal conditions. 'This famous town is becoming from day to day less interesting,' he wrote: 'it resumes by degrees its ordinary features of stupidity; our jails are now but thinly inhabited;

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, July 8 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 358-59.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, July 30 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 243.

³ The exceptions were (i) persons in custody before its publication, (ii) persons having had direct communication with the enemy, (iii) county delegates, (iv) captains of forces actually in the field.

⁴ Castlereagh to Wickham, July 30 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 244.

⁵ *H. of C. Journals*, xvii. 351.

⁶ Charlemont to Haliday, July 30 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 327.

our courts-martial no longer sit for blood ; our streets are not so gaily adorned and encumbered with heroes in red and blue ; and our brisk juvenile military magistrates are gradually relinquishing the civil department to our old slow-eyed justices of the peace. Even Newtownards, the headquarters of severity (a priest sat there as judge-advocate ¹), exhibits a sullen acquiescence with the new absurd system of mercy and humanity. Passing through on Saturday I took notice that the gallows was struck, after suspending no more than a beggarly dozen ; here we had but half that number who died with such 'grinning honours,' and may now despair of ever rivalling that paltry borough in a display of that first of virtues, loyalty, and its favourite guardian, wholesome severity.' ²

5

Though martial law was now in operation, the civil courts had not been closed ; and it was to the latter that the leading prisoners in Dublin were turned over. A high commission under the presidency of Chief Justice Carleton sat long into the night, but the verdict in each case was foregone. Whilst Curran and Plunket inveighed against the law of treason (in Ireland the evidence of *one* witness was sufficient to convict ³), Toler smacked his lips in grateful anticipation of the coming feast. The brothers Sheares were the first to be condemned.⁴ Their execution was fixed for the day following their condemnation, and frantic efforts were therefore made by their friends to save their lives. They themselves sent a message to the Lord-Lieutenant entreating for mercy and promising to make discoveries. Alexander Knox conveyed the message from Newgate gaol, and was present at the subsequent conversation between Castlereagh and Attorney-General Wolfe when the question of advising His Excellency to grant a reprieve

¹ Rev. John Cleland, Vicar of Newtownards and Londonderry's estate agent. He was judge-advocate in a number of trials at the Newtownards courts-martial (including that of the Rev. James Porter of Greyabbey), and as such wrote the minutes, which are preserved in the Dublin Castle archives.

² Haliday to Charlemont, Aug. 8 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 330.

³ The Act of 7 Will. III, c. 3, which enacted that 'no person is to be tried or attainted of high treason but upon the oaths of two witnesses' was not extended to Ireland till 1821 (by 1 and 2 Geo. IV, c. 24).

⁴ See the excellent account of the trial given by William Ridgeway in Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 255-398. This account was first published separately after the event by Castlereagh's directions.

was examined at length. 'The manner in which the case was considered and motives which decided it were interesting in the highest degree,' observed Knox, 'because they were the result of the soundest wisdom and the most genuine humanity.'¹

The papers found in the possession of the brothers had not only established their guilt, but had proved beyond all doubt that a rising and a general massacre of the loyal inhabitants of Dublin were in immediate contemplation at the time of their arrest.² One of these papers was a draft proclamation which recommended the insurgents to give no quarter to any man who dared resist them. 'Vengeance, Irishmen, vengeance on your oppressors!' concluded this famous document in words which were to become the war-cry of succeeding generations of Irish patriots. 'Remember that thousands of your dearest friends have perished by their merciless orders! Remember their burnings—their rackings—their torturings—their military massacres and their legal murders. Remember Orr!'³ The only point of any doubt was whether Henry Sheares was cognisant of this proclamation which, though found in his desk, was admittedly drawn up in the handwriting of his younger brother who lived with him. Even if he had no knowledge of it (which on the face of the evidence appears improbable), it was decided that this did not so affect the merits of the case as to justify any reasonable distinction being made between the two culprits. Cornwallis, who was inclined to err whenever possible on the side of mercy, rejected their petition, and the law was allowed to take its course with the usual barbarous details which marked public executions for high treason.⁴

From the viewpoint of policy Government had nothing to gain from listening to the suggested disclosures except an en-

¹ Knox to Schoales, July 20 : Knox, *Remains*, iv. 32.

² Camden to Portland, May 21 : H.O. Ireland, 76. See above, p. 246.

³ *Auckland Correspondence*, iii. 420. The full text of the proclamation is printed *loc. cit.*

⁴ *New Cork Evening Post*, July 23 : Madden, iv. 323 (2nd ed.). They were buried in the vaults of St. Michan's Church, Dublin, where owing to a curious antiseptic property of the soil and walls (which contain a compound of argillaceous earth and carbonate of lime) their bodies could be seen long afterwards dried up, but otherwise well preserved. The head of John was subsequently removed for a bet by a boy, who kept it for twenty years, and then gave it to Dr. Madden. Madden restored it to its former position, and placed the bodies in leaden coffins to prevent similar acts of desecration in future.

hanced reputation for infirmity, since it was already in possession of the main features of the plot ; and the authorities would only have exposed themselves to the severest abuse throughout the Kingdom had they forborne to make an example of the two individuals but for whose apprehension a rising and a general massacre would have taken place within the capital. The most that can be said for the unfortunate brothers is that actually they bore a much smaller part in the rebellion than some of the other principals such as O'Connor and MacNevin, who had intrigued with the French, but whom Government had for lack of evidence found it impossible to bring to justice.

The succeeding trials brought forward as a material witness the notorious Tom Reynolds, whose action it will be remembered had led to the arrests of March 12.¹ Hitherto informers had made it a condition that they should never be called upon to give evidence in public, and it was only after a narrow escape from assassination and repeated promises of government protection that Reynolds was persuaded to break a precedent which had so frequently embarrassed the Castle in the preceding months.² The result was that three more rebel leaders were convicted on his testimony. These were John McCann, Michael Byrne and Oliver Bond, the moving spirits on the Leinster Directory. McCann was the next to suffer, but immediately after his execution a number of prisoners awaiting trial expressed their willingness to make a complete confession of the conspiracy and submit to banishment, provided their lives were spared and also those of Byrne and Bond, who were then lying under sentence of death. Castlereagh and Cornwallis were both strongly inclined to accept this proposal, since they were genuinely anxious to stop the further effusion of blood. However, the Lord-Lieutenant doubted whether it would be possible to find a third man in authority to agree with them, for, as he said, 'the minds of the people are now in such a state that nothing but blood will satisfy them.'³ As the application was made on July 24 and Byrne's execution was fixed for the following day and Bond's for the 26th, the legal advisers

¹ See above, p. 205.

² Compare Cooke's remarks : 'I fear we cannot convict *legally*, though we have evidence upon evidence.' Cooke to Auckland, March 19 : *Auck. Corr.* iii. 393.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, July 26 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 372.

of the Crown were hastily summoned to a conference with the Lord-Lieutenant and his Secretary in the Castle. The Chancellor was absent in the country ; but the two Chief Justices, the Law Officers and the Prime Serjeant attended, and spoke most decidedly against listening to the proposal. They pointed out that if the two men at present under sentence did not suffer, it might be impossible to get a jury to convict another rebel of treason, adding that in any case the petition was inconclusive since some of the principal prisoners, including Arthur O'Connor, had not signed it. Castle-reagh spoke as strongly in favour of respiting the condemned men until the question should have been discussed in detail—but, as it happened, to no purpose. The lawyers remained firm, and in the face of such united professional opinion the Chief Secretary could do nothing further. Byrne was accordingly executed.¹

Bond was to die on July 26. On that morning two of his friends who were members of Parliament² called at the Chief Secretary's office and informed the minister that O'Connor and the other prisoners who had refused to sign the first petition were now willing to subscribe to a fresh plea for mercy, and that they had intimated their readiness to communicate all the information in their power so long as they were not required to incriminate any stated individuals. After making their confession the prisoners would go into exile at the discretion of the Government, and they hoped that on these conditions Bond's life would be spared.³ Castlereagh immediately hurried off to the Lord-Lieutenant, there was another prolonged conference, and in spite of the vehement opposition of some of the members (particularly the Speaker, who was 'frantic against it'⁴) it was decided to consider the petition, and Bond was respited till the 30th. In particular among the prisoners MacNevin, O'Connor and Thomas Emmet requested an interview with Castlereagh, promising faithfully to give the fullest information so long as they were not called

¹ Elliot to Pelham, July 28 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106) ; Gilbert, 143.

² Francis Dobbs, M.P. for Charlemont, and Henry Alexander, M.P. for Londonderry.

³ Narrative of such verbal and written communications as have passed between the Government and the State Prisoners : H.O. Ireland, 78 ; *Cast. Corr.* i. 350.

⁴ Cooke to Pelham, Aug. 9 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

upon to mention names.¹ To the meeting, which took place a few days later, the Chief Secretary brought the Chancellor and Cooke. The three prisoners undertook to draw up a memoir indicating the parts which they had respectively played in the conspiracy, and if necessary to submit themselves to an examination on oath. This proposal was accepted by Castlereagh on behalf of the government; and Bond was respited for a further period of a week, no longer time being granted in order to test the sincerity of his associates. On his side the minister promised that if the undertaking was properly carried out, no more executions would take place except for murder; and that, although Government reserved a full discretion to retain any or all of the prisoners in custody pending the war with France, their ultimate place of exile would not be a penal settlement such as Botany Bay.²

As a result of this interview no less than seventy-nine prisoners signed a paper agreeing to abide by these conditions. O'Connor and Emmet, it appears, were none too eager to accede to all the stipulations, but on pressure from some of the others whose lives would be endangered by any further hitch they finally added their signatures. These negotiations, in Castlereagh's words, 'did not fail to produce considerable warmth in this town, to which the conversation of some of the friends of Government materially contributed.' The minister was therefore compelled to rise in the House of Commons and in a public utterance repress 'the disposition to clamour too prevalent amongst our friends.'³ Cooke, for instance, reported that 'all the loyalists felt themselves deserted.'⁴ Elliot was more sanguine than his colleague in the Civil Department, and applauded the wisdom of this policy. 'If the information to be expected is freely given,' he wrote to Pelham, 'it must be extensive and important, and the confession of so many of the principal members of the conspiracy with their exile cannot fail of making a more deep impression on the minds of the lower class of rebels than the execution of a few individuals, who

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, July 28: H.O. Ireland, 77.

² Arthur O'Connor, *Letter to Lord Castlereagh* (Dublin, 1799), p. 8. O'Connor has the honesty in the midst of his diatribes to admit this evidence of Castlereagh's humane intentions.

³ Castlereagh to Wickham, July 31: H.O. Ireland, 77; *Corn. Corr.* ii. 379. I have not been able to find any report of this speech.

⁴ Cooke to Pelham, Aug. 9: Pelham MSS.

would have met their fate with fortitude and have been considered martyrs to the cause.' ¹

The promised memoir signed by O'Connor, Emmet and Mac-Nevin was delivered to the Chief Secretary shortly afterwards.² It was a skilfully-worded document amounting to some forty closely-written pages, but it constituted a justification rather than a confession of the authors' conduct, and in so far as it treated of the history of the United Irish movement it contained some palpable misrepresentations. The original objects of the United Irish Society were asserted to have been Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation, its members not being drawn in any quantities to republicanism and a foreign alliance till the recall of Fitzwilliam and 'the indemnified violations of law in the north' during the following year had convinced them that these objects could not be attained by any other means.³ For the success of such remedial measures *now* they could not answer: 'but of this we are sure, you must extirpate or reform.'

Castlereagh acknowledged in confidence to Wickham that in spite of the wasted declamation and insolent prophecy the memoir was a truthful document as to facts, and that the prisoners stated every circumstance which Government through the Secret Service knew to have occurred. 'Their narrative so clearly accords with the Secret Intelligence,' he said, 'that it is reasonable to assume that no material communication has taken place of which the King's Ministers have not been accurately informed.'⁴ That the history of the United Irish movement had been at all misrepresented he was unfortunately not qualified to say, though in view of his private secretary's opinions he may have surmised it.⁵ On account of its exculpatory nature Cornwallis refused to permit the publication of the memoir, and when copies had been transcribed he ordered the original to be returned to the prisoners.⁶ The prisoners thereupon disclaimed any intention of offending, and declared their readiness to submit to an examination on oath

¹ Elliot to Pelham, July 30: Pelham MSS.

² The text of the memoir will be found in *Cast. Corr.* i. 353-372.

³ Contrast Wolfe Tone's remarks quoted above, pp. 86-87.

⁴ Castlereagh to Wickham, Aug. 4: H.O. Ireland, 78.

⁵ See above, pp. 225-226.

⁶ Cornwallis to Portland, Aug. 7: *Corn. Corr.* ii. 382.

either before the Privy Council or the Secret Committee of Parliament. When they came before the latter they showed as much disingenuousness as they had done in their memoir ; and though treated with the utmost courtesy by Castlereagh throughout the proceedings, they answered with studied insolence and bravado.¹ They misrepresented the outbreak of rebellion as having been primarily due to the coercive measures of Government, and explained their conduct in hanging back the previous year and refusing to join their northern friends on the grounds that a French invasion was expected, which they preferred as a more humane method of effecting a revolution. However, they were considered to have given their evidence as to facts unreservedly and in the spirit of their engagement. In consequence Bond was relieved and the rigour of their prison *régime* relaxed.²

Castlereagh was very anxious that the public should be accurately informed of the extent of the United Irish connection with the republican France, and so be made to realise the predominantly revolutionary and anti-British character of the conspiracy. As this had not been brought out clearly in the State Trials, he begged his uncle Camden to obtain the English Cabinet's permission for him to publish the proofs which he had received from the informer Turner in Hamburg.³ Camden transmitted this request to the Home Secretary in a letter strongly supporting his nephew's submissions, and Cornwallis wrote in a similar vein.⁴ But Portland replied that the Cabinet after a lengthy discussion had come to the conclusion that, with the exception of selected portions of MacNevin's intercepted plan of invasion,⁵ none of the documents in question could be published 'consistently with that secrecy which, in certain cases, the honour and safety of the State require to be observed.'⁶ Thus was another justification of

¹ The fullest account of the examination is contained in the *Memoirs of Messrs. Emmet, O'Connor and McNevin and their Examinations before the Secret Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons in the Summer of 1798* (London, 1802). See also W. J. MacNevin, *Pieces of Irish History*, 231-279.

² Lecky, v. 36, 95 ; *Cast. Corr.* i. 352.

³ Castlereagh to Camden, July 15 : H.O. Ireland, 77.

⁴ Cornwallis to Portland, July 15 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 227.

⁵ See above, pp. 199-200.

⁶ Portland to Cornwallis, July 25 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 230

official activity in arrest of the rebellion denied the authorities in Dublin. This veto did not extend to the publication of the evidence of the State Prisoners as given before the Secret Committees of Parliament, and the more incriminating passages forthwith appeared in the press by Castlereagh's orders.

O'Connor, Emmet and MacNevin now seized the opportunity afforded by their privileged confinement to insert 'a very unbecoming advertisement' in the newspapers. They described their reported depositions as 'gross and to us astonishing misrepresentations, not only not supported by but in many cases directly contradictory to the facts we really stated on those occasions.'¹ Small wonder that this conduct exasperated the Castle authorities, since it tended to discredit the Reports of the Secret Committees in the eyes of the public. There was an angry scene, too, in the House of Commons, where the feeling prevailed that the three signatories had broken their engagement with the Government, and should therefore be surrendered for trial by court-martial. Castlereagh is stated to have been *the only dissident* on this occasion.² He strongly opposed the claim of Parliament to interfere in a matter which solely concerned the executive power in the State, with whom the prerogative of mercy rested. The minister carried his point and refused to disclose his intentions. In point of fact he had already consulted Pitt, and on the Prime Minister's suggestion he proceeded to adopt the more moderate and sane course of re-examining the three delinquents before the Secret Committee of the Lords.³ This official gesture had the desired effect upon the rebel leaders, for they immediately acknowledged the truth of their former evidence as published, and furthermore confirmed it in writing. 'They have now by their signatures placed their confession above cavil,' reported Castlereagh on the day of the re-examination, 'and completely done away the mischievous effects of their very indecent and offensive Advertisement.'⁴ That they owed their lives to the personal intervention of Castlereagh in Parliament they cannot

¹ H.O. Ireland, 81; *Corn. Corr.* ii. 392.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, Sept. 4. Buckingham to Grenville, Aug. 28: *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 290.

³ Pitt to Castlereagh, Sept. 1: *Cast. Corr.* i. 329.

⁴ Castlereagh to Pitt, Sept. 7: *Cast. Corr.* i. 336.

but have realised, yet they showed their gratitude by subsequently joining in the most bitter and virulent attacks on his character.¹

A further example of the Chief Secretary's political tact may be mentioned here. Other prisoners were examined, and among them Neilson, who gave several answers deeply incriminating Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Grattan. Castlereagh insisted on omitting this part of Neilson's evidence from the published report, since in the one case its inclusion might prejudice Lord Edward's family when the bill of attainder came before Parliament, and in the other it might shake the credit of the report even should Grattan thereby be exhibited 'in his true colours as flirting with the traitors though not actively embarked with them.'²

The final difficulty concerning the State prisoners arose with regard to their disposal *en masse*. The American ambassador in London refused to permit their emigration to the United States, and it was feared in official quarters that if they were allowed to retire to the Continent pending the war they would immediately settle in enemy countries.³ Government therefore had no alternative but to keep them in confinement till peace was signed in 1802. They were then released and went into exile. O'Connor accused the Chief Secretary of breaking faith with them, and for a time this charge appears to have been widely believed. However, documents in the Home Office and Londonderry archives which have now come to light leave no doubt that from the beginning 'a full discretion was reserved of retaining any or all of the prisoners in custody so long as the war should last, provided their liberation was deemed inconsistent with the public safety.'⁴

6

Before the fate of the State prisoners had been decided the alarming news reached Dublin that a French force had succeeded in effecting a landing in Connaught and was carrying all before

¹ See O'Connor's *Letter to Lord Castlereagh* and MacNevin's *Pieces of Irish History*, *passim*.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, Sept. 5 : H.O. Ireland, 78. As a mark of official censure Grattan's name was struck out of the Privy Council Roll. See below, Appendix II, p. 450, note.

³ Rufus King to Portland, Oct. 17. Castlereagh to Wickham, Oct. 29 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 395, 413.

⁴ Narrative of Communications between Government and the State Prisoners : H.O. Ireland, 78 ; Londonderry MSS. ; *Cast. Corr.* i. 350.

it.¹ The truth was that the French Directorate had at last acceded to the persistent demands of Wolfe Tone for an invasion by despatching a number of small expeditions to different points of the Irish coast. On August 22 the first of these landed under General Humbert in Killala Bay. The hostile force, which numbered barely 1,000 strong, easily made itself master of the surrounding country and met with little resistance, though the people did not rise as the French commander had been led to expect.² A detachment looked in at Edgeworthstown and found that the principal family had fled to Longford, taking with it the frightened little Maria.³ Maria's father had turned from his scientific pursuits in these troubled times to the task of raising a corps of yeomanry. By a mistake of the Ordnance Office no small arms were sent down, with the result that on the appearance of the French most of the prospective soldiers joined the enemy and nearly lynched one of Maria's brothers after the family's ignominious flight. Poor Mr. Edgeworth could do nothing but blame the Chief Secretary and post off in a rage to see the Lord-Lieutenant.⁴

The French troops behaved admirably, and when a few days after disembarking they encountered their first opposition at Castlebar they swept it aside without difficulty. The raw yeomanry and militiamen led by Lake and Hutchinson, though exceeding the French force by almost three times its number, fled in panic at the first charge of the enemy, thereby bestowing upon the engagement the significant title of 'The Castlebar Races.' Lake's private secretary, who was present, confessed that 'so shameful a rout he never saw.'⁵ This success was shortlived. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the French general could have effectively followed it up, if he had made the attempt, since Cornwallis and several other British commanders were already marching upon him from different directions. As it happened Humbert was a peasant adventurer whom the Revolution had

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, Aug. 24 : H.O. Ireland, 78.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, Sept. 10 : H.O. Ireland, 78.

³ Maria Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovel Edgeworth*, ii. 213 (ed. 1820).

⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Life and Letters*, i. 162 (ed. Hare).

⁵ Cooke to Wickham, Sept. 1 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 399.

provided with an opportunity of becoming a general quickly. Possessing all the Frenchman's innate vanity he sat down and proceeded to dictate ludicrous despatches to the Directorate on the subject of his exploits at Castlebar. In one of these which subsequently came into Castlereagh's hands the number of prisoners stated to have been taken by him exceeded the whole British force under arms.¹ Meanwhile his men commenced to drift away into the bogs and mountains, and realising after some days that his position was hopeless, he wisely surrendered to Cornwallis with the remnants of his army.² They were treated as prisoners of war, and repatriated with the exception of a few Irish nationals found in their ranks.³

The fate of the other expeditions was scarcely less unfortunate. Napper Tandy landed in Donegal with a handful of French soldiers and marines ; and after remaining on shore for eight hours, during which period he distinguished himself by becoming so drunk that he had to be carried on board again, the ' general ' sailed away in his ship without doing any harm.⁴ About the same time a small fleet under Admiral Bompard was sighted off Lough Swilly, and after encountering a powerful British squadron was compelled to surrender. Castlereagh's uncle, Alexander Stewart, who was now a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood of Letterkenny, witnessed the engagement from the heights of Horn Head and transmitted a glowing account of it to Dublin.⁵ Amongst those taken prisoner on this occasion was Wolfe Tone, clad in the uniform of a French general. He was conveyed to Dublin, where he was immediately tried by court-martial and sentenced to be hanged. He begged to be shot by a platoon of grenadiers, but his request was refused, and rather than face the gallows he cut his throat. If Curran's dramatic application to Chief Justice Kilwarden for a writ of Habeas Corpus on the ground that a court-martial had no right to try him while the civil courts were open, and the immediate grant of the writ with an

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, Sept. 25 : H.O. Ireland, 78.

² Cooke to Wickham, Sept. 11 ; Cornwallis to Portland, Sept. 13 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 404.

³ See generally C. L. Falkiner, *Studies in Irish History*, 250-341 ; also P. B. Bradley, *Bantry Bay*, 163-188.

⁴ Wickham to Castlereagh, Oct. 25 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 405-409.

⁵ Charlemont to Haliday, Oct. 15 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 337.

order to stay the execution failed to save his life, it was because the suicide's knife had done its work too surely.¹ Anyhow, life for him was no longer worth living. The Sheares's, Bart Teeling, Porter, McCracken, Lord Edward, Oliver Bond, his old friends were all gone to their long rest, and the others were destined for banishment. Thus did the vision which Theobald Wolfe Tone had once seen at Macart's Fort fade out in the gloom of a Newgate cell, while the Chief Secretary sat on over his despatches in the Castle and congratulated the English ministers that 'now the prospect of foreign assistance is in great measure at an end.'²

7

Parliament rose early in October.³ Though it closed on a happier note, the session had been a trying not to say a riotous one which extended throughout the summer. On the day before the last, Castlereagh rose in the House of Commons to make the welcome announcement that a decisive naval engagement with the French had been won off the mouth of the Nile. Losing for a moment his customary reserve he moved, with a warmth that well became him, a vote of thanks 'to the gallant Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, the gallant officers of the fleet, and the brave soldiers and seamen for the valour evinced by them on this glorious occasion.' After this motion had been deservedly carried without a dissentient, the Chief Secretary seized the opportunity of moving a similar vote 'to the brave and loyal yeomanry corps of Ireland whose services had effected the salvation of this country and our glorious Constitution.' He became almost eloquent in his praise of the yeomen. 'Although in estimating the public force they were not looked to beyond mere local service within their respective districts,' he informed honourable members, 'yet the moment the public appeared to demand the union of loyal and gallant exertions, those brave and truly patriotic bands everywhere appeared ardently emulous to share the glory and the danger of protecting their country and have immortalised their names to

¹ Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 614-626. Bradley, 191-224. Wolfe Tone, *Autobiography*, ii. 356-364.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 16 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 447.

³ October 6 : *H. of C. Journals*, xvii. 393.

the remotest posterity.' This motion was similarly carried, and the enthusiasm soon spread outside the House. Political animosity and sectarian bitterness were momentarily forgotten in the general rejoicing. As a local journal appropriately remarked, the occasion 'afforded to the citizens of Dublin a degree of gratification to which they have for a long time been strangers.'¹ The guns boomed in the Park, bells rang and a *feu de joie* was fired; and while loyal gentlemen 'paraded the streets to a late hour' singing *God Save the King* and *Croppies Lie Down!* the Chief Secretary retired to a well-earned night's rest with Emily in Merrion Street.

A final vote of thanks brought proceedings to a close in the House of Commons. This time it was to the Speaker, and in moving it, Castlereagh (so we are told) delivered 'a short elegant and just eulogy' upon the official conduct of that gentleman.² But if any individual deserved the thanks of the House surely it was the Chief Secretary himself. For over six months he had borne almost unaided the burden of Government business in the Commons. Moreover, he had done so during a period in which few members were spontaneously amenable to discipline; and by effectually keeping on the leash the bloodthirsty pack of human wolves led by Beresford and Toler from the Treasury Bench itself he had shown unsuspected gifts as a parliamentary manager. That a suitable reward should be conferred upon him was realised at Whitehall, and the question was mooted in the Cabinet.

A solution was offered by Pelham, whose intention of braving the Castle atmosphere once more was announced at this time.³ Pelham proposed that as he hoped to resume his office, the acting Chief Secretary should be appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in place of Sir John Parnell, and that he should in addition receive an English peerage.⁴ But Castlereagh, while welcoming the prospect of Pelham's return, felt himself obliged to decline the offer of Parnell's office out of delicacy to the holder, who had

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, Oct. 9.

² *Id.* Oct. 12.

³ Marshall to Castlereagh, Sept. 26: *Cast. Corr.* i. 378.

⁴ Elliot to Pelham, Oct. 4: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106). Parnell was to be compensated with Castlereagh's office of Keeper of the Signet and also a peerage.

spent nearly fifteen years of hard work at the Treasury, even if he was sometimes a little behindhand with his accounts—as for the proposed peerage he professed himself unwilling to accept an honour which involved leaving the House of Commons. ‘I have only to beg,’ he wrote to Pelham, ‘that any degree of service I may have been able to render during your illness may not be considered by you or the King’s Ministers as calling for any departure from the system which would otherwise have been acted upon towards the friends of Government in this country. I am perfectly satisfied with the favours already shown me, and by none more gratified than by the mark of confidence I have lately received in being entrusted during a period peculiarly critical with the discharge of your duties. It will add to my satisfaction to be assured that his Majesty’s interests are considered as not having materially suffered in my hands, but I beg to disclaim having performed any duty which has not been more than rewarded by former instances of the King’s favour conferred on me and my family.’¹

Pelham now made a final effort to accelerate his convalescence by taking bark and putting himself under a course of sea-bathing in Sussex, but his physique refused to respond to this treatment.² The only course now left was resignation, and he took it, much to the distress of the King, who declared that ‘in the present circumstances it is the greatest loss and disappointment I could have experienced.’³ In discussing this step with Portland the invalid pressed for the permanent appointment of his *locum tenens*, knowing, as he subsequently told the latter, ‘that in your hands the public service was losing nothing.’⁴ Cornwallis on hearing the news of Pelham’s decision echoed his support.⁵ But the Home Secretary was still dubious as to the wisdom of the proposed change, and, as Camden reported, ‘there are others who entertain strong prejudices against the appointment of an Irishman to be Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant.’⁶ The principal opposition

¹ Castlereagh to Pelham, Oct. 5 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

² Marshall to Castlereagh, Oct. 26 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 411.

³ Portland to Pelham, Nov. 1 : Pelham MSS.

⁴ Pelham to Castlereagh, Nov. 2 (misdated Nov. 28) : *Cast. Corr.* i. 419.

⁵ Cornwallis to Pelham, Nov. 8 : Pelham MSS.

⁶ Camden to Castlereagh, Nov. 4 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 424.

to be overcome was at Windsor, where the royal conscience jibbed at the idea of such a flagrant departure from constitutional precedent, while in Downing Street Grenville and his brother Buckingham did their best to block the appointment in a fit of jealousy. It was Pelham and Pitt who appear finally to have convinced George III by pointing out that in view of the critical months just passed in Ireland the nomination of a comparative stranger to the disputed office might conceivably upset the whole tenor of the local administration, and this would be fatal to the prospects of a speedy return to normal. On his side Cornwallis was most unwilling to part with his present Secretary, testifying to 'his lordship's excellent character and truly faithful conduct towards me in every respect.'¹ When he had arrived in Dublin had not Lord Castlereagh indicated with the greatest tact the principal characters with whom as Lord-Lieutenant he would have to deal? And had not Lord Castlereagh shown him where his predecessor in the Viceregal Lodge had failed in sacrificing his judgment to evil counsels and in permitting a faction to gain a dangerous ascendancy over him? Clearly the only man for the office was Lord Castlereagh, and before this logic His Majesty gave way.²

When the contested appointment was officially announced, Cornwallis expressed his complete satisfaction. Although he admitted the propriety of the general rule that the office should not be held by a native of the country, the Lord-Lieutenant felt that, as Lord Castlereagh was 'so very unlike an Irishman,' this fact constituted an additional reason why the claim to an exception in his favour should be allowed.³ If a single sentiment has damned a man's public reputation, it is this unfortunate expression of opinion which has been so frequently employed in attempts to prove that Castlereagh was never in sympathy with the needs of his fellow-countrymen. In reality nothing could be farther from the truth. His numerous private letters and memoranda as well as his public utterances on Irish affairs which are still in existence make it abundantly manifest that throughout his career Castlereagh pursued the policy which he considered to be in the best

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Dec. 8 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 8.

² Portland to Cornwallis, Nov. 3 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 428.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, Nov. 20 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 441.

interests of his country—and to that country, it should not be forgotten, he was by birth and property inseparably attached. So far indeed from hating the Irish people and wishing to suppress their national religion and language, as he has been represented as having done in certain ill-informed and partisan quarters, he endowed at his own expense several Roman Catholic foundations and was the means of establishing a 'Gaelic Society' in Dublin. The object of the latter organisation was to encourage the study of Erse; translations from Irish prose and verse writers were executed by some of its members, and Edward Bunting's famous collection of Irish melodies is supposed to have been undertaken at his suggestion.¹ It is significant that when he went to England after the Union the society rapidly declined, and it was not long before it was defunct. (His last service to it is said to have been the characteristic one of releasing its secretary from the sheriff's prison where he was confined for a considerable debt.)

If Castlereagh was in any respect unlike an Irishman it was from the local types, with which Cornwallis had since his arrival in the country been thrown into constant contact, that he differed—political reactionaries like Clare, Foster and Toler, blood-thirsty magistrates like John Claudius Beresford and Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald, prejudiced sectarians like Dr. Duigenan and the scores of nameless self-seeking placemen, discontented partisans, criminals and traitors which thronged the capital. If he looked beyond the narrow and selfish nationalism which centred in a corrupt and partial legislature to the finer concept of imperial unity and international advantage, there were some who considered him un-Irish. But Cornwallis was also the first to acknowledge the wisdom of bringing forward at such a crisis 'a man of Lord Castlereagh's talents, who possesses the general esteem of his countrymen, and who knows too well the real interests of Ireland to suppose that they can be promoted by any measures that are not equally favourable to the welfare and the prosperity of Great Britain.'²

As he posted along the roads from Dublin to Newtownards so

¹ Charles Vane, third Marquess of Londonderry, 'Memoir of Viscount Castlereagh': *Cast. Corr.* i. 77-78. Reede, *op. cit.* 11, 21, 26. Castlereagh's patronage of Bunting has been doubted: *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 27, 1822 (editorial by James Stuart).

² Cornwallis to Portland, Nov. 7: *Corn. Corr.* ii. 430.

that he might be the first to convey the welcome news of his appointment to his father, Castlereagh reflected on many things, not least of which was Pelham's disinterested conduct in the affair. On his arrival at Mount Stewart he therefore sat down to thank that gentleman for so successfully exerting himself on his behalf. The letter which he wrote shows very clearly the working of his mind on the delicate question of his personal fortunes ; and also that in the most difficult of all tasks, the adequate expression of gratitude for services rendered, he was no mean tyro. The original is preserved among the Pelham Papers in the British Museum.¹

' MOUNTSTEWART, 9th Nov. [1798].

' MY DEAR MR. PELHAM,

' Before I reply to the more public part of your letter,² I should wish to express the sincere and deep sense I entertain of your kindness to me personally. Since our first acquaintance, which in point of intimacy must be dated from your arrival in this country, I have been much gratified. I have felt myself peculiarly honoured by the favor and confidence which you have shewn me, and in addition to the many marks of private regard which I have to acknowledge, I am not less sensible of the uniform zeal with which you have in your official situation consulted my interest and promoted my advancement.

' Whatever ambition I may have of high situation, I can with great truth assert, that it is a circumstance of sincere regret to me, that the endeavours I have made to secure to the publick your services have failed. I cannot wish to see your health seriously exposed, but I shall never cease to consider your retirement from office, (at the present period more particularly,) as one of the severest injuries the public interest could have received. The close connexion and confidence with which it was your intention to have honoured me, had your health admitted of your return, will ever be remembered by me with gratitude and affection, and I entreat that the sentiments of private regard which you obligingly express³ may not suffer from our temporary separation. The partiality with which you have considered, and mentioned the claims and wishes of my family to the Duke of Portland I shall ever remember with the truest sense of obligation, and I should receive with

¹ B.M. Additional MSS. 33, 106.

² For the text of this letter see Pelham to Castlereagh, Nov. 2 (misdated Nov. 28) : *Cast. Corr.* i. 419.

³ In the letter mentioned above Pelham had written : ' If I had returned to Ireland it would have been my wish to have made our political and official connexion as close as possible. . . . I can now only say that I shall sincerely rejoice in every opportunity of cementing our private friendship.

additional pleasure any mark of favor, which connected itself with the friendship which has subsisted between us, and which you have promised shall be permanent.

‘ Having endeavoured to express, tho’ very imperfectly, my private feelings, I cannot dissemble the very serious apprehension with which I look forward to the duty, which tho’ not officially announced, it appears is likely to devolve on me. If it should be determined to accede to the wish Lord Cornwallis has expressed in respect to the succession to your office, I must request that you will sometimes allow me to avail myself of your advice, in the discharge of a trust, which in ordinary times I should not enter upon without distrust, but which at present is too weighty either for my years, my talents, or my experience.

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‘ Believe me my dear Mr. Pelham,
With sincere regard and affection,
Ever most faithfully yours,

Rt. Honble. Thomas Pelham,
etc., etc., etc.’

CASTLEREAGH.

By a fortunate combination of accidents Castlereagh thus found himself, though not yet thirty years of age, in a position of supreme authority in Ireland. Already he had won his spurs in the suppression of the most dangerous rebellion with which the government of that country had hitherto been faced. It now remained to be seen whether he could keep them in the most unenviable office which the Prime Minister had to bestow.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNION : FAILURE

I

BEFORE the rebellion could properly be said to be over, the English ministers were discussing a project which was to form the first great milestone in Castlereagh's career—the legislative Union of Ireland with Great Britain. The advantages of such a measure had in the past not escaped the attention of Pitt, to which they had been drawn by some of his advisers, particularly the Irish Chancellor ; but the idea did not take definite shape in the Prime Minister's mind until some weeks after the rebellion had broken out.¹ Ever since the time of Cromwell's novel constitutional experiment in which Ireland had been represented (she sent thirty members to the Reformed Parliament in 1654), there had been advocates of a union on both sides of the Channel. Molyneux's pamphlet on the legislative dependence of the Irish Parliament² had made such an impression on that body that a few years after its appearance in the press the members petitioned Queen Anne for incorporation. But the English legislature, now thoroughly imbued with mercantilist doctrine, indignantly rejected their request, and proceeded to assert its jurisdiction over the sister kingdom by imposing a long series of commercial restrictions and endorsing the native anti-Catholic penal laws.³ When the American War broke out three-quarters of a century later, the situation in Ireland had profoundly changed. A new national spirit had sprung up, which regarded the local Parliament, in spite of its inherent corruption, as the guardian of popular liberties, and loudly demanded its complete emancipation. The advocates of union were now to be found principally in England,

¹ Pitt to Auckland, June 4, 1798 : *Auck. Corr.* iv. 2.

² *Case of Ireland bound by Acts of Parliament in England* (1698).

³ *Lecky*, v. 124-125.

and the birth in 1782 of a separate and independent Irish legislature made their case stronger. Lord Chancellor Camden, who was one of them, had previously declared that 'Ireland should be made a wall to Great Britain instead of a door.'¹ He now went further and boldly asserted that the corruption and consequent subservience of the Irish Parliament was under the newly-won 'independence' the only means by which the imperial connection could be maintained, and that, if this state of affairs were permitted to continue, 'sooner or later civil war would be the consequence.'² In less than fifteen years Camden's words had come true; and though he did not live to witness the event which he dreaded, his son and grandson who inherited his opinions were compelled by a curious stroke of fate to be intimate spectators of the catastrophe.

Castlereagh had therefore from the outset of his political career been in favour of a closer connection between the two countries, and fears that popular concessions unless supported by a strong mutual alliance would weaken international ties run through all his early letters. 'The man who tells either Kingdom that it should possess separation is the decided enemy of both,' he wrote in 1792. 'The true and enlightened friends of Ireland should endeavour to conquer their local affections and to assume the part of arbiters between the Kingdoms, in each of which ignorance, distrust, self-interest, and national prejudice are sowing jealousies, the fatal consequences of which even at present operate disadvantage and may in time disunion.'³ A year later he wrote to his uncle: 'Depend upon it, my dear Lord B., you must change your system with respect to Ireland; there is no alternative, now her independence is admitted, but to govern her by reason, *or unite her to Great Britain by force*. A middle path will not do. . . . Give Ireland such a government as your own. When she abuses it you will then find a union a much more practicable measure. . . . It would require less force to unite the two Kingdoms than to govern as heretofore.'⁴ The Relief Act, which conferred the

¹ Buckinghamshire to Stanley, July 20, 1778: Buck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 523).

² Camden to Grafton, Aug. 13, 1784: Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, v. 327 (ed. 1846).

³ Stewart to Haliday, Feb. 22, 1792: Londonderry MSS.

⁴ Stewart to Bayham, Jan. 26, 1793: Londonderry MSS.; Alison, i. 12.

parliamentary franchise on 30,000 Catholics in 1793, had strengthened his convictions, and he had thus realised for some time that a union was the only alternative to complete separation. Unfortunately it required a sanguinary insurrection to galvanise the English ministers into agreement. When the troops for which he had asked were eventually sent over, he did not disguise from Pitt his feeling that the interposition of Great Britain at that moment was peculiarly advantageous. 'I have always been apprehensive of that false confidence which might arise from an impression that security had been obtained by our own exertions,' he wrote. 'Nothing would tend so much to make the public mind impracticable with a view to that future settlement without which we can never hope for any permanent tranquillity.'¹

Though the younger Camden had recommended a union before becoming Lord-Lieutenant, he had subsequently declined to be the instrument of carrying it into effect.² However, just before he left Ireland he sent Pitt a memorandum containing some useful hints on the subject.³ He suggested immediate consultation with the Cabinet and also with the leading individuals, Catholic as well as Protestant, in both islands. In return for their support the Catholics should be admitted to the United Parliament, a concession which could do no harm, since the majority of that assembly would be necessarily members of the Established Church. Powerful opponents of the measure might be won over by promises of political honours or other preferment. This advice had had an immediate effect upon the Prime Minister, for on reaching London Camden informed his nephew that 'the King and every one of his Ministers are inclined to an Union, and it will certainly be taken into consideration here.'⁴

Cornwallis, who at the outset appears to have received only the vaguest instructions, proceeded very cautiously. The few persons of consequence whom he ventured to sound told him that the subject must not be mentioned until the rebellion had

¹ Castlereagh to Pitt, Sept. 7, 1798 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 337. See above, p. 255.

² Bayham to Stewart, Feb. 4, 1793 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 156. Camden to Pitt, June 1, 1797 : Pitt MS. 326. See above, p. 100, note 1.

³ For the text of this see J. H. Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon*, 335-338.

⁴ Camden to Castlereagh, [July] 1798 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 376.

been completely put down.¹ By September he could report little progress, though he was now quite satisfied that 'a perseverance in the system which has hitherto been pursued can only lead us from bad to worse, and after exhausting the resources of Britain must end in the total separation of both countries.' He had a firm sympathiser in his Chief Secretary. 'I have thought a good deal on this subject,' admitted Castlereagh in a confidential letter to Pelham on October 4. 'I see with you its difficulties and dangers in a strong point of view, but am discouraged by neither from looking to it as the only measure that can ever enable this country to act either upon a Protestant or Catholic principle with safety to the Constitution itself. As a distinct Kingdom our present system is not reconcilable to any principle upon which the human mind can or will rest quiet, which does not condemn our Establishment in principle, and consign them inevitably in a course of years to certain destruction. Whether the pride or good sense of the country will triumph it is a little difficult to calculate.'²

If the general public had not yet got wind of the scheme, those few individuals who were situated in well-informed quarters were already hotly discussing it among themselves. Even in the Castle there was a marked division of opinion as to its merits. Clare and Cooke would only consent to an ultra-Protestant union, while Parnell and Foster were violently opposed to it in any form. Cornwallis and Elliot, on the other hand, were eagerly for it, and desired that it should be accompanied by the utmost possible concessions to the Catholics. 'I am determined not to submit to the insertion of any clause that shall make the exclusion of the Catholics a fundamental part of the Union,' declared the Lord-Lieutenant, 'as I am fully convinced that until the Catholics are admitted into a general participation of rights, (which when incorporated with the British Government they cannot abuse), there will be no peace or safety in Ireland.'³ Pitt was known at this time to favour Catholic emancipation, and it was hoped in more enlightened quarters that he would consent to it as forming a component part of the proposed union. But when Clare set out early in October for a conference on the subject with the

¹ Cornwallis to Pitt, July 24 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 367.

² Castlereagh to Pelham, Oct. 4 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

³ Cornwallis to Ross, Sept. 30 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 417.

Prime Minister in London, Cornwallis could not repress his fears that the Catholic claims would be thrown over as a result of the Irish Chancellor's Protestant zeal. 'I certainly wish that England could now make a union with the Irish nation,' he told Pitt, 'instead of making it with a party in Ireland.'¹ He felt that a partisan alliance would mean an eternal warfare with the Catholics and Presbyterians, the two religious denominations which together comprised nine-tenths of the local population.

A week after Clare had sailed the Lord-Lieutenant sent over Elliot as a makeweight, with instructions to press his own views strongly on the English Government. He would have preferred to send Castlereagh as well, but at the moment the latter could not be spared from his post.² However, Elliot enjoyed the fullest confidence of both Lord-Lieutenant and Chief Secretary and was well fitted for the mission. He stayed at Castlereagh's house in Cleveland Square, and during the next few weeks had lengthy conversations with Pitt, Portland, Grenville, Dundas and other English ministers of consequence. He was not surprised to find that Dundas was the only one who agreed with him that the Catholics should be admitted to Parliament and political office *at the same time* as a legislative union was effected.³ Clare's dominating personality had already weaned Pitt from most of his 'popish projects,' at least for the time being.⁴ 'It has never, I understand, been in contemplation to put any restrictions on the power of the Legislature with respect to the future consideration of the Catholic claims,' wrote Elliot; 'but the leaning of the opinion of the Cabinet is against extending the privileges of the Catholic Body at the present conjuncture.'⁵ Cornwallis and Castlereagh acquiesced in this view as the best that could be hoped for in the circumstances, but Elliot could only reconcile himself to the prospect of the immediate exclusion of the Catholics from the United Parliament with the greatest reluctance. The Under-Secretary, in fact, sent in his resignation, but eventually withdrew it when the Lord-Lieutenant and Chief Secretary represented to

¹ Cornwallis to Pitt, Oct. 8 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 418.

² Cornwallis to Pitt, Oct. 17 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 420.

³ Elliot to Castlereagh, Nov. 9 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 431.

⁴ Clare to Castlereagh, Oct. 16 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 393.

⁵ Castlereagh to Elliot, Oct. 24 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 404.

him that it was not proposed to close the door of concession for ever to that body. After all, argued Castlereagh, 'the principle of incorporation is everything . . . and makes it more a matter of feeling than substance what decision is taken on the other.'¹ An earnest of the good intentions of the English Ministry was given in the preliminary draft of the 'Treaty of Union' which was despatched to the Castle early in November. In one of the articles power was expressly reserved to alter the oaths to be taken by members of both Houses of the united legislature.² 'On my pressing the matter strongly,' wrote Cornwallis to a friend, 'Mr. Pitt has promised that there shall be no clause in the Act of Union which shall prevent the Catholic question from being hereafter taken up, and we must therefore only look to the wisdom and liberality of the United Parliament.'³

2

It was at this stage in the negotiations that Pelham announced his inability to return to Ireland, and Castlereagh was nominated his permanent successor in the Chief Secretary's Lodge. 'Under all the circumstances,' wrote Cooke in a letter of congratulation to the minister, 'I think your lordship a bold man, and I hope you will be a successful one. . . . You will have much difficulty to encounter, and you have but little time.'⁴ The antagonism to the idea of union with which Castlereagh met when he came to sound the leading characters and different classes in the country might well have caused a politician of ordinary courage to quail and desist from its pursuit. The most strenuous opposition came from the legal profession, which was led by Serjeant Fitzgerald, William Saurin, George Ponsonby, William Plunket and Charles Kendal Bushe, and hoped, in the words of Bishop Percy, 'to make their fortunes spouting in Parliament rather than at the Bar.'⁵ The lawyers were ably supported by the bankers, merchants and corporation of the city of Dublin, and their chief

¹ Castlereagh to Camden, Oct. 22 : Pitt MSS. 327.

² Heads of Treaty of Union : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 398. Portland to Cornwallis, Nov. 12 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 437.

³ Cornwallis to Ross, Nov. 15 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 436.

⁴ Cooke to Castlereagh, Nov. 9 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 431.

⁵ Percy to his wife, Jan. 21, 1799 : Percy MSS. (B.M. Add. 32, 335).

spokesmen were David Latouche and John Claudius Beresford. The Orange societies and the Protestant Ascendancy Party sided generally with the Opposition, as did also the country gentry.¹ Except in Dublin the lower orders were as yet apathetic and inclined if anything to view the proposed legislative change as the substitution of one vile government for another. Reformed republicans like Drennan doubted whether it would render the people effectually immune from foreign charms. 'I imagine if the heart of Ierne turns to any other wooer,' he said, 'a forced marriage will only have the effect it too often has, of turning fornication into adultery.'² The Beresford faction was secretly intriguing against it, and the revenue officers under the First Commissioner's influence were doing their best to foment opposition in the counties.³ Amongst the peers Downshire, Charlemont and the Duke of Leinster were strongly opposed, as too were with a few exceptions the borough-mongers, of which Downshire was the most powerful. These elements were expected to constitute a particularly strong opposition in Parliament, and the Chief Secretary's uneasiness was increased by the news that they included two of the most important members of the administration—the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Speaker of the House of Commons. When this state of affairs became known to the English Cabinet, a grave impression was created among its members. Portland wrote off to Castlereagh requesting his 'immediate presence in this country,' and Elliot added that he would not be surprised if the project were ultimately abandoned.⁴

There were, however, certain signs of encouragement already discernible, especially among the nonconforming religious bodies. Lords Fingall and Kenmare, the leaders of the Catholic aristocracy, promised their support, and Dr. Troy, the titular Archbishop of Dublin, professed himself willing to use his influence. They were now quite reconciled to the prospect of emancipation following instead of accompanying a legislative union. They realised that in the present temper of the Irish Parliament the

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 23 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 446.

² Drennan to McTier, Oct. 15 : *Drennan Letters*, 722.

³ R. Griffith to Pelham, Jan. 16, 1799 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

⁴ Elliot to Castlereagh, Nov. 23 ; Portland to Castlereagh, Nov. 26 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 9, 23.

discussion of their claims would only accentuate Protestant jealousy and thus hazard the success of the major measure.¹ 'I cannot tell you how eager all the south, and indeed all the Catholics, are for the Union,' wrote Buckingham to his brother.² In Ulster many Presbyterians who had tired of treason were moving in support. 'I infer the popular current will not be very strong in this corner of the north against the measure,' wrote Londonderry from Mount Stewart. 'I conclude most of those who were actuated with a strong reforming spirit entertain such a dislike and antipathy to the present subsisting Parliament of the country, that they will not be very adverse to any change that will rid them of what they deem so very corrupt a legislature.'³ The linen trade, which hoped to secure permanently the protection it now enjoyed of grace in the British market, was avowedly friendly, though Belfast, being an Orange stronghold, was on the whole antagonistic.⁴ But the weight of authority against the measure, if it did not represent the majority of public opinion, was at least backed by that of political and territorial influence.

As soon as he had received official notification of his appointment, Castlereagh was hard at work in canvassing support for the measure and conciliating likely quarters of opposition. His uncle Camden advised him that in the circumstances there was only one course to follow, namely 'to talk a firm and decided language ; to find out by as much address as possible the expectations of individuals and the objections of bodies of men ; and to lose no time in securing the one and counteracting the others.'⁵ It was not difficult to gauge general feeling, for, as John Claudius Beresford told him, 'in Ireland they always mix their politics with *their liquor* and declare their sentiments by their toasts.'⁶

In less than a month he had interviewed the leading individuals of consequence, and reported to Whitehall that with judicious management the measure *might* be carried when Parliament met

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, Dec. 5 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 35. Buckingham to Grenville, Dec. 7 : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 405.

² Buckingham to Grenville, Nov. 26 : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 397.

³ Londonderry to Castlereagh, Dec. 10 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 39.

⁴ Cornwallis to Portland, Dec. 15, Jan. 2 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 18 ; *Cast. Corr.* ii. 80.

⁵ Camden to Castlereagh, Nov. 16 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 449.

⁶ J. C. Beresford to Castlereagh, Dec. 12 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 41.

in January.¹ By his directions the support of the principal provincial newspapers was secured, and every attention was paid to the press. 'The subject though much talked of is little understood,' he wrote at this time. 'We shall endeavour in a few days to have it stated ; it is necessary to encourage the discussion, else there is some degree of danger of its being disposed of by acclamation.'² The official statement of the Government case he entrusted to Cooke, whose famous pamphlet in defence of the measure was quickly drawn up under his supervision.³ He himself was indefatigable in his literary exertions. 'The times require that we should, if possible, strengthen the Empire as well as this Kingdom,' he explained to his old parliamentary opponent, Parsons. 'There can be little doubt that a Union on fair and liberal principles effected with the good-will of both Kingdoms would strengthen the Empire ; and there can be as little question that Ireland would be more secure were the resources of England pledged to her by incorporation than as they are at present but as a favour. The complexion of our internal system is most unpleasant ; it is strongly tinctured with religious animosity, and likely to become more so. United with England, the Protestants feeling less exposed would become more confident and liberal ; and the Catholics would have less inducement to look beyond that indulgence which is consistent with the safety of our Establishment.'⁴

In obedience to the Home Secretary's wishes Castlereagh set out for London on December 7. Parnell and Foster were already in town, and Downshire, another weighty opponent, sailed with him on the Holyhead packet.⁵ In spite of the prevailing bad weather the Chief Secretary managed to reach Cleveland Square within a week, where his house had been prepared for his reception.⁶ He carried with him a letter from the Lord-Lieutenant to Pitt in which the following significant passage occurred :

'That every man in this most corrupt country should consider the important question before us in no other point of view than as it may

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 23 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 448.

² Castlereagh to Beresford, Nov. 24 : *Beres. Corr.* ii. 189.

³ *Arguments for and against an Union between Great Britain and Ireland Considered* (Dublin, 1798).

⁴ Castlereagh to Parsons, Nov. 28 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 32.

⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, Dec. 11. ⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, Dec. 21.

be likely to promote his own private objects of ambition or avarice will not surprise you : but you will, I think, be pleased at the sensible line which the principal Catholics have adopted, and which makes me the less regret the narrow principles by which our present plan of Union is circumscribed.' ¹

He also bore despatches to Portland in which he and the Lord-Lieutenant had sketched the sentiments of the leading members of the Irish Parliament, as well as a memorandum on the question of representation. ²

He found the majority of the ministers despondent and inclined to drop the measure, at least for the present. He endeavoured to persuade them to his own way of thinking with encouraging reports and suggestions. After conversing at length with Pitt, Portland, Grenville and Dundas, he eventually succeeded in winning them over to his opinion that the measure should be pressed on without delay, notwithstanding the many obstacles in its path ; and that it should be presented to both Parliaments simultaneously when they met in January. He added that if the English Government was determined to carry the measure, and would permit a proper military force to be kept in Ireland, ' there could not be any doubt of its success or any reasonable fear entertained of real danger in the attempt.' ³

The Cabinet decision was announced at a meeting on December 21, when his plan of representation in the United Parliament and the general outline of the scheme was approved. ⁴ To the Commons he had proposed that selected boroughs and all counties should each return one member (except Dublin and Cork, which might return two), making the total not exceeding 100. The Irish temporal peers should elect twenty-eight of their number to sit in the House of Lords for life, and there should also be chosen four spiritual peers who would sit by rotation. The Irish Revenue should contribute a proportion of the cost of imperial defence ; this sum was to be fixed later, but it was not expected that it would exceed that which was normally contributed by the country

¹ Cornwallis to Pitt, Dec. 7 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 8.

² Castlereagh to Portland, Dec. 16 : H.O. Ireland, 79. For the memorandum on parliamentary representation see *Corn. Corr.* iii. 6.

³ Portland to Pelham, Dec. 28 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

⁴ Portland to Cornwallis, Dec. 21 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 20.

for its protection.¹ In settling details it was proposed to appoint commissioners from both countries as in the case of the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707. The commissioners would draft the final articles of union for the consideration of both Parliaments. 'There is the utmost anxiety to make the terms unexceptionally just,' wrote Castlereagh to a supporter, 'and Ministers are determined upon its taking a wide range throughout the Kingdom.' At the same time he anticipated many a rude blast 'before we reach our port.'² It was typical of his capacity for hard work that he succeeded in concluding these negotiations in under a fortnight, so that the New Year saw him back at his desk in Dublin Castle with the amended draft treaty of union in his portfolio.

In spite of Buckingham's frequent complaints from Ireland during the preceding weeks that Castlereagh's youth and inexperience rendered him unfit to be entrusted with such important work as he had lately been discharging,³ the English ministers seemed well pleased with his visit. The Home Secretary stated confidentially to Pelham that his 'talents, conduct and manners very justly entitle him to the testimony you have long borne them.'⁴ Even Grenville, who as Buckingham's brother might be expected to be prejudiced, admitted: 'I was better satisfied than I had expected with his manner of doing business, which I found both ready and clear; and he seems to me to have the success of this measure most thoroughly at heart.'⁵

On account partly of the delicate and confidential nature of his mission, and partly of the increased importance of his office, Castlereagh was prior to his departure from London sworn a member of the English Privy Council, and he took his seat at the Board.⁶ The procedure at St. James's was similar to that at Dublin Castle, except that the King was present. He knelt before His Majesty to take the oath of allegiance, and he stood to take

¹ Portland to Cornwallis, Dec. 24: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 53.

² Castlereagh to Lord Shannon, Dec.: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 61.

³ See particularly Buckingham to Grenville, Sept. 26, Nov. 7, Dec. 25: *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 325, 368, 423.

⁴ Portland to Pelham, Dec. 28: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

⁵ Grenville to Buckingham, Jan. 4, 1799; Buckingham, *Courts and Cabinets of George III*, ii. 426.

⁶ Dec. 19: Haydn, *Book of Dignities*, 206.

that of a Councillor of State.¹ When the oaths had been administered by the clerk in attendance the new Privy Councillor went forward and kissed the King's hand. He then shook hands with every councillor present, beginning with the Chancellor on the King's right and proceeding to the Lord President on his left and then on round the table.² It was a signal distinction to receive. Castlereagh was the youngest of the few Irishmen living upon whom it had been conferred ; and its significance was enhanced by the fact that he was sworn alone and not as was usual along with others who had also been marked out for places at the Board.³

Meanwhile the Opposition had been profiting by the Chief Secretary's absence from Ireland, and every possible source of energy and interest was ranged against the measure. 'Dublin violence increases,' reported Cooke to his Chief. 'Pamphlets swarm—one or two good.... I wish your return much.'⁴ Bushe had just published his inimitable *Cease your Funning* ; Barrington and Drennan were scribbling hard. 'Surely all Bedlam, not Parnassus is let out,' wrote the worthy Knox.⁵ Two days after Christmas appeared the first number of the celebrated *Anti-Union*, a journal whose title sufficiently indicates its object.⁶ The Catholics began to show their uneasiness, and were inclined to hold aloof from the controversy. There was a sudden startling increase in the daily crop of robberies, burnings, houghings and murders. There was wild talk of another insurrection, and it was rumoured that French assistance had been again invoked. The placemen and office-holders were furious with the Lord-Lieutenant, whose 'unaccountable conduct,' said Dr. Duigenan, 'has rendered him not only an object of disgust but of

¹ A signed copy of this oath is preserved in the Londonderry archives.

² Cp. *Colch. Corr.* i. 270.

³ The only other Irishmen members of the English Privy Council at this time were John Foster, John Beresford, Sir John Parnell, Lord Clare and Lord Mornington.

⁴ Cooke to Castlereagh, Dec. 15 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 43.

⁵ Knox to Castlereagh [Dec. 14] : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 45.

⁶ *The Anti-Union* was published by James Moore, 45 College Green, and appeared thrice weekly till March 9, 1799, when it ceased. It ran in all to 32 numbers, which cost 2d. each and consisted of one sheet quarto size. They contained a number of interesting lampoons on Castlereagh. George Ponsonby was one of the principal contributors. Copies are now exceedingly rare. I am indebted to Dr. J. S. Crone for the use of a set which is in his possession.

abhorrence to every man I have conversed with.' ¹ Cornwallis sincerely lamented their behaviour, but could do nothing. 'When the interests of the country and private advantage take opposite sides,' he wrote, 'the latter is pretty sure of obtaining the victory.' ²

Castlereagh had left London with the impression fixed steadfastly in his mind that 'nothing but an established conviction that the English Government will never lose sight of the Union till it is carried can give the measure a chance of success.' ³ In the short time that remained to him before the meeting of Parliament he was determined to employ every available legitimate means in strengthening the Government forces, and he set to work with a will. More funds constituted the first essential. On the day after his arrival in Dublin he wrote to Wickham: 'Already we feel the want and indeed the absolute necessity of the *primum mobile*. We cannot give that activity to the press which is requisite. We have good materials amongst the young barristers, but we cannot expect them to waste their time and starve into the bargain.' ⁴ He accordingly entreated for the despatch of £5,000 in bank notes by the first messenger, and he had the satisfaction of receiving this sum a few days later. ⁵ 'Arrangements with a view to further communications of the same nature will be highly advantageous,' he assured Wickham in a letter of acknowledgment, 'and the Duke of Portland may depend on their being safely applied.' ⁶

Castlereagh had realised by this time the utter impossibility of bringing forward the measure in Parliament when some of the most important members of the administration were opposed to it, and he now decided to make an example which would be felt by the mass of placemen. Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and James Fitzgerald, Prime Serjeant, were dismissed from their offices and replaced by staunch unionists. Dismissals of subordinate officials followed and several resignations, among them being that of John Claudius Beresford. The Speaker,

¹ Duigenan to Castlereagh, Dec. 20: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 52.

² Cornwallis to Brome, Dec. 27: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 25.

³ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 2, 1799: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 81.

⁴ Castlereagh to Wickham, Jan. 2: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 27.

⁵ A record of the number, date and value of each note was preserved in the Home Office archives: H.O. Ireland, 85.

⁶ Castlereagh to Wickham, Jan. 10: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 34.

Foster, could not be removed, but his son, who held a post in the Revenue, was dismissed shortly afterwards.¹ The Chief Secretary had previously informed Portland that 'much repugnance prevailed in the public offices to the measure, and that Government was rather thwarted than supported by some of its leading departments'; he now assured the English minister that 'the new arrangements will remove much of the evil.'²

On January 5 Castlereagh published the draft sketch of the measure which he had brought back with him from London.³ As it was to be substantially altered in its final form, nothing further need be said of its contents here except that the principle of pecuniary compensation to borough-owners for loss of patronage was not yet applied. During the next few days he was exceedingly busy. Hundreds of circulars were sent out to individual members of Parliament in which he acquainted them 'that business of the greatest importance will be submitted to Parliament on the first day of the session, and His Excellency trusts that it will suit your convenience to be in town previous to that time when I shall hope to have an opportunity of communicating with you upon the measures to be brought forward.'⁴ Letters poured into the Castle in shoals from the recipients of this circular. 'Having made up my mind upon the subject,' wrote the Duke of Leinster, 'I am determined to give the question every opposition I can; therefore do not see any necessity for my attendance till the measure is laid before Parliament.'⁵ Other correspondents were more indignant. 'I have been a member forty years,' wrote the independent Sir John Blackwood, a neighbouring landowner in County Down; 'by many of the Lord-Lieutenants I have been honoured even with social intercourse; none however have presumed to call for my attendance on any Parliamentary subject. This is the first, without any previous knowledge of me, who has condescended to summon me in the style as to one of the vassals of Administration.'⁶ Another member denounced the proposed

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, Jan. 16, 23 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 38, 45.

² Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 16 : H.O. Ireland, 85.

³ For the text of this draft see *Corn. Corr.* iii. 33 ; *Belfast News-Letter*, Jan. 8.

⁴ Circular to Members of Parliament, Jan. 7 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 82.

⁵ Leinster to Castlereagh, Jan. 16 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 115.

⁶ Blackwood to Castlereagh, Jan. 15 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 113.

union as a measure 'so disgraceful to the nation and so mischievous in its consequences to the British Empire that every honest Irishman actuated by his duty to his King and his love for his country must oppose it while he has existence.'¹ The Chief Secretary paled slightly as he saw his daily post-bag, but he dived into it unflinchingly. Cornwallis sent him uneasy notes from the Park. 'There is no time to lose in this business,' he said in one of them. 'If you can come for ten minutes, I shall be glad to see you. The ride will do you good.'²

The young minister refused to be discouraged. There had been a fair number of satisfactory replies to the circular, and he told Portland that he might reckon on a majority of sixty in the House of Commons if their supporters attended as promised.³ But Cooke, who was more familiar than his Chief with the crooked paths of party intrigue in Ireland, stated in confidence that the success of the measure really depended on the attitude of the leading borough owners, and their support in most cases could not be reconciled to the uncompensated loss of vested interest.⁴ Downshire, the most powerful of this class, had declared his opposition before Castlereagh left London, and a number of others on learning the details of the measure followed his example.⁵ However, many of them had their price, and a sordid bargaining began. Lord Altamont would only concede his support on condition of receiving a Marquessate, and Lord Cahir stood out for the principle of pecuniary compensation.⁶ Members of the House of Commons who sat for nomination boroughs were expected to vote according to their patrons' directions (unless, of course, they had obtained their seats by purchase), and the concentration of borough interests in a comparatively few hands considerably simplified negotiations. There were indeed a few disinterested borough-owners like Lady Castlereagh's uncle, Tom Conolly of

¹ J. McDonnell to Castlereagh, Jan. 14 : Londonderry MSS.

² Cornwallis to Castlereagh, Jan. 16 : Londonderry MSS.

³ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 21 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 126.

⁴ Cooke to Grenville, Jan. 15 : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 441.

⁵ Downshire to Castlereagh, Dec. 30 : Londonderry MSS. Lords Ely (Jan. 7), Longford (Jan. 10), Farnham (Jan. 13) and Cahir (Jan. 19) also wrote to Castlereagh declaring their opposition ; their letters are not included in the *Castlereagh Correspondence*.

⁶ Altamont to Castlereagh, Jan. 17 : Londonderry MSS.

Castletown, who had always desired a union irrespective of personal disadvantage, but the majority would only yield their support on terms.

Castlereagh's most serious handicap was lack of time, and though he did his best in the matter of interviews and personal letters, interested parties made full use of his embarrassment. 'The demands of our friends rise in proportion to the appearance of strength on the other side,' wrote the Lord-Lieutenant to a friend on the eve of the battle; 'and you, who know how I detest a job, will be sensible of the difficulties which I must often have to keep my temper; but still the object is great and perhaps the salvation of the British Empire may depend upon it. I shall therefore as much as possible overcome my detestation of the work in which I am engaged and march on steadily to my point.'¹

3

Parliament was opened in state by the Lord-Lieutenant on January 22. It was shortly after four o'clock in the afternoon when the Speaker took the Chair in the House of Commons. The candles had already been lighted, and the benches and galleries were closely packed. The *Anti-Union* reporter had some difficulty in gaining a good seat at what he called this 'dramatic entertainment,' though he eventually managed to squeeze himself into the throng of spectators which looked down upon the assembly. He noted in facetious mood that 'many beautiful women equally excited by patriotism and the curiosity so peculiar to the charming sex occupied the front rows of the boxes, kindly allowing the gentlemen (as there was hardly standing room) to press upon them without complaining of any inconvenience as all the ladies were interested about a Union that was to have Irish performers.'² In the midst of this distinguished gathering was Emily, whom Barrington describes as 'palpitating for her husband's fate.'³

The King's Speech, which was heard with close attention, was a most carefully-worded document. So as not to endanger the success of the measure at the outset, Castlereagh had forbore to

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Jan. 21 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 39.

² *The Anti-Union*, Feb. 2 (No. 17). ³ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 252.

make any express reference to a Union in it. The Speech simply recommended 'some permanent adjustment which may extend the advantages enjoyed by our sister Kingdom to every part of this island,' and expressed the hope that 'this consideration joined to the mutual affection and common interest may dispose the parliaments in both Kingdoms to provide the most effectual means of maintaining and improving a connexion essential to their common security, and of consolidating as far as possible into one firm and lasting fabric the strength, the power, and the resources of the British Empire.'¹

It had been arranged that the customary address of thanks should be moved by Lord Tyrone, but this nobleman was no sooner on his feet when it was seen that George Ponsonby had also risen to make a motion. After their names had been shouted for some time by their respective supporters, the Speaker intervened and gave Ponsonby the precedence. Ponsonby commenced with the observation that persons who were aliens and strangers to the legislature were, so he had been informed, at that moment usurping seats in the House. In his opinion the noble lord who held a high official position 'as ostensible minister' fell under this description, adding that a Place Act had been passed shortly before the end of Lord Camden's viceroyalty which compelled members who accepted places of profit from the Lord-Lieutenant to vacate their seats. He therefore moved that 'Robert Viscount Castlereagh having accepted the office of Chief Secretary to His Excellency Lord Cornwallis, his seat in that House was thereby vacated.' Barrington seconded this motion, and a discussion of nearly two hours followed. At length when the Attorney-General had pointed out that the Act quoted was not retrospective and that the Chief Secretary had already been confirmed in his office by a resolution of the House, Ponsonby consented to withdraw his motion.² The Speaker then turned to the main business of the day, and called on Lord Tyrone.³ Barrington, who hated Tyrone for his aristocratic connections (he was the eldest son of the Marquess of Waterford) and regarded him as

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xviii. 10.

² See above, p. 216.

³ For the account of this debate I have principally followed that in the *Belfast News-Letter*, Jan. 29, Feb. 1, and *Report of the Debates in the House of Commons on the 22nd and 23rd January 1799 on the subject of an Union* (Dublin, 1799).

Clare's automaton, subsequently asserted that his speech on this occasion was written out for him by his friends, since he had its text concealed in the crown of his hat, where he glanced from time to time when at a loss for a word.¹ However that may be, Tyrone was careful to point out in moving the address of thanks that the royal speech did no more than pledge the House to a discussion of the question of Union.

The late Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Parnell, opened for the Opposition. He frankly invited an authoritative avowal that the measure of consolidation alluded to in the Speech from the Throne was a legislative union. When the Chief Secretary had admitted this to be so, George Ponsonby immediately rose and moved an amendment to the address pledging the House to maintain '*the undoubted birthright of the people of Ireland to have a free and independent legislature, as it was asserted by the Parliament of this Kingdom in 1782 and acknowledged and ratified by His Majesty and the Parliament of Great Britain.*' This amendment was warmly argued in a long and acrimonious debate. Parsons, Fitzgerald, Barrington, Tighe, Bowes Daly, Egan, and a host of other private members came forward to champion the nation's rights. As each succeeding speaker rose to deliver his opinions, general excitement throughout the chamber became more intense and honourable members' language more bitter. 'I never was witness to such a scene,' said Beresford. 'You would have thought that you were in a Polish Diet. Direct treason spoken, resistance to the law declared, encouraged and recommended. I never heard such vulgarity and barbarism.'²

It was long after midnight when the Chief Secretary rose from his place on the Treasury Bench to address the House. The flickering candles now burning low in their sockets illumined a truly striking figure. His naturally graceful appearance was heightened by the peculiarly elegant and courteous bearing which he affected. Though his voice admitted of little variety, he spoke in full and sonorous tones. His rigid self-control as a rule checked any tendency to diffuse rhetoric, and on this occasion he is in particular reported as having spoken 'with great manliness and

¹ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 236.

² Beresford to Auckland, Jan. 24 : *Beres. Corr.* ii. 194.

good sense.’¹ He had listened, he said, with particular attention to the arguments which had been advanced on the subject of a legislative union from the other side of the House, and he was bound to confess that ‘from the mass of clamour which was dealt forth he had been able to collect very little sound reasoning’; he had heard imputations cast against his own side ‘that might have been retorted but for the interference of more refined manners.’ He trusted that ‘no man would decide on a measure of such importance on private or personal motives, for if a decision was thus to be influenced it would be the most unfortunate that could ever affect the country.’ After dismissing the argument of parliamentary incompetence to entertain such a question on the ground that ‘any legislature was at all times competent to adopt the most effectual means of promoting the general welfare,’ he proceeded to a broad recapitulation of the advantages of Union. ‘What is the price of connection at present with Great Britain?’ he asked. ‘A military establishment far beyond our natural means of support, and for which we are indebted to Great Britain who is also obliged to guarantee our public loans.’ It was not by flattery, he went on to point out, that the country could be saved—‘truths however disagreeable must be told.’ If Ireland did not boldly look her situation in the face and accept that Union which would strengthen and secure her, she would perhaps have no alternative ‘but to sink into the embrace of French fraternity.’ His concluding sentences struck a note of prophecy.

‘You talk of national pride and independence, but where is the solidity of this boast? You have not the British Constitution, nor can you have it consistently with your present species of connection with Great Britain. . . .

‘As the pride of this country advances with her wealth, it may happen that you may not join Great Britain in her wars. It is only a common polity that will make that certain. Incorporate with Great Britain, and you have a common interest and a common means. If Great Britain calls for your subjection, resist it—but if she wishes to unite with you on terms of equality, ’tis madness not to accept the offer.’

As Castlereagh resumed his seat, Plunket caught the Speaker’s eye. For the next two hours the House listened to a superb example of Irish parliamentary eloquence which combined a

¹ H. Alexander to Pelham, Jan. 23: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

heated denunciation of a Union with a bitter attack upon the minister's personal character.¹ As a lawyer and the self-appointed guardian of the national constitution, he expressly denied the competence of Parliament to violate its sacrosanctity. 'I tell you that, if circumstanced as you are, you pass this Act, it will be a mere nullity and that no man in Ireland will be bound to obey it.' He invited the House to take down his words. The official agent of this abominable project he now described as 'a young philosopher who has been transplanted from the nursery to the Cabinet to outrage the feelings and understanding of the country.' But base and wicked as was this project, the speaker boldly asserted that the means which were being used to effect it were more flagitious.

'I had been induced to think that we had at the head of the executive Government of this country a plain honest soldier, unaccustomed to and disdaining the intrigues of politics, and who as an additional evidence of the directness and purity of his views had chosen for his Secretary a simple and modest youth (*Puer ingenui vultus ingenuique pudoris*) whose inexperience was the voucher of his innocence. And yet I will be bold to say that, during the viceroyalty of this unspotted veteran and during the administration of this unassuming stripling, a system of black corruption has been carried on within the walls of the Castle which would disgrace the annals of the worst period in the history of either country.'

He again called for his words to be taken down, and even offered to prove their truth at the bar of the House. Then turning towards the Speaker, he continued with cutting sarcasm :

'National pride ! Independence of our country ! These we are told by the noble lord are vulgar topics fitted only for the meridian of a mob, but unworthy to be mentioned to such an enlightened assembly as this ; they are trinkets and geegaws fit to catch the fancy of childish and unthinking people like you, Sir, or like your predecessor in that chair, but utterly unworthy the consideration or the matured understanding of the noble lord who condescends to instruct it.'

He brought this torrent of invective to a close by pointing an accusing finger at the Chief Secretary, who occupied a prominent position a few feet away on the Treasury Bench, and exclaiming :

¹ Barrington, who was present, called it 'the ablest speech ever heard by any member of that Parliament' (*Rise and Fall*, 250). The best account will be found in Plunket's *Speeches* (ed. Hoey), pp. 41-52.

'The example of the Prime Minister of England inimitable in its vices may have deceived the noble lord. The Minister of England has his many faults. He abandoned in his latter years the principle of reform by professing which he had attained the early confidence of the people of England, and in the whole of his political conduct he has shown himself haughty and untractable. But it must be admitted that he is endowed by nature with a towering and transcendent intellect, and that the vastness of his resources keeps pace with the magnificence and unboundedness of his projects. I thank God that it is much more easy for the noble lord to transfer the minister's apostacy and his insolence than his comprehension and his sagacity; and I feel the safety of my country in the wretched feebleness of her enemy. *I cannot fear that the Constitution which has been founded by the wisdom of sages and cemented by the blood of patriots and heroes is to be smitten by such a green and sapless twig as this.*'¹

The impression which these extraordinarily severe strictures caused in the House it is not difficult to imagine. Lady Castlereagh was sitting in the gallery, and her childlessness had frequently been a subject for gossip. The audience at once realised that Plunket was referring not merely to her husband's imputed political imbecility but to his suspected personal imbecility as well.² But even this insult failed to disturb the young minister's composure, and if he had betrayed momentary signs of restlessness he immediately recovered himself, and sat on in his place with the appearance of one who rather enjoyed such an unusual style of oratory. He could not suppress a cynical smile when the speaker came to his final remarks and the House cheered tumultuously a peroration which was destined to be repeated in Ireland for many years to come.

'Yet, Sir, I thank Administration for this measure. . . . They have united every rank and description of men by the pressure of this grand and momentous subject; and I tell them that they will see every honest and independent man in Ireland rally round her Constitution and merge every other consideration in his opposition to this ungenerous and odious measure. For my own part I will resist it to the last drop of my existence and with the last drop of my blood, and when I feel the hour of my dissolution approaching I will like the father of Hannibal take my children to the altar and swear them to eternal

¹ Plunket's *Speeches*, 46 (ed. Hoey). In the published report of this debate the last words appear as 'green and limber twig,' but the traditional version quoted above is believed to be correct.

² *Dublin University Magazine*, xv. 259.

hostility against the invaders of their country's freedom. . . . I shall be proud to think my name will be handed down to posterity in the same roll with those distinguished patriots who have successfully resisted the enemies of their country. Successfully I trust it will be. In all events I have my exceeding great reward. I shall bear in my heart the consciousness of having done my duty, and in the hour of death I shall not be haunted with the reflection of having basely sold or meanly abandoned the liberties of my native land. Can every man who gives his vote on the other side this night lay his hand upon his heart and make the same declaration? I hope so. It will be well for his own peace. The indignation and abhorrence of his countrymen will not accompany him through life, and the curses of his children will not follow him to the grave.'

But Plunket's oratorical performance did not constitute the sole remarkable incident in this remarkable debate. Earlier in the evening a member named Frederick Trench, whose support Castlereagh reckoned he might secure, had stated that, although he did not approve of either the address or the amendment, he would vote for the amendment as the lesser of two evils, hoping that the subject would be brought forward at a more opportune moment. He now rose a second time and declared his conviction that he was mistaken in supposing that by voting for the amendment the field would be left open for future discussion, and that he would therefore vote for the address. The Opposition asserted that in the interval he had had a conversation with Cooke, who on counting the House realised that his support must be purchased on his own terms. Castlereagh on consulting with the Under-Secretary is said to have nodded his acquiescence, 'and a significant and certain glance obvious to everybody convinced Mr. Trench that his conditions were agreed to.' Although Barrington is the authority for this statement, it remains on record that Mr. Trench did deliver two speeches during the debate in the manner described, and that two years later, after the Union measure had passed into law, he became Lord Ash-town.¹

A friend of Pelham's who sat out the proceedings in the gallery declared that he had never witnessed a debate in which so many votes were decided by the eloquence of the speakers.²

¹ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 243-244.

² Griffith to Pelham, Jan. 24: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106); Gilbert, 199.

There is no doubt, however, that the members of the Opposition had almost all the eloquence with them, and the impression which they made was accentuated by the manifest partiality of the Chair. With the exception of Castlereagh, Sir John Blaquiere and the Knight of Kerry, the speakers on the Government side were exceedingly poor. In all upwards of eighty members spoke, and the House after sitting uninterruptedly for twenty-one hours divided at 1.30 on the afternoon of the 23rd. As the Chief Secretary walked out into the lobby, it is reported that he clapped a friend on the shoulder and said 'he should carry the division by forty-five.' He received a rude surprise when the numbers were announced. For Ponsonby's amendment there voted one hundred and five members—against it one hundred and six!¹

A strange anecdote has been told by Barrington with regard to one member's conduct at this momentous division, which is supposed to have had a vital effect upon the future of the measure.² Luke Fox was a needy but cunning barrister, who represented one of Lord Ely's pocket boroughs. His patron, though personally opposed to the Union project, had not issued him any orders as to how to vote, so that thinking the Opposition was in a majority he remained in the body of the House with the Anti-Unionists. But as soon as the doors were locked he became alarmed and endeavoured to conceal himself in a dark corner. However, he was discovered, and the Serjeant-at-arms was ordered to bring him forth to be counted amongst the supporters of the amendment. He now became very confused, and suddenly declared that he had accepted the office of the Escheatorship of Munster³ from Lord Castlereagh, which vacated his seat and precluded him from voting. After some discussion his excuse was admitted and he was not counted. It is significant that if his name had been inserted in the division lists the numbers would have been equal; the Speaker would then have given his casting vote in favour of the amendment, and this would have prevented the raising of the question on the following day. On the other

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xviii. 11. Pole to Mornington, March 14, 1799: *Wellesley Papers*, i. 85.

² Barrington, *op. cit.* 244-245.

³ This office was equivalent to the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds in England. Though its remuneration was merely nominal it was deemed to be a place of profit under the Crown.

hand, it appears that Mr. Fox had already mentioned his lack of instructions to the Chief Secretary, and had by implication if not expressly accepted the office stated. His acceptance was publicly announced a day or two afterwards.

Immediately after the division on Ponsonby's amendment the question was put for agreeing to the original address, and this was carried by one hundred and seven votes to one hundred and five. Though the Government had succeeded in carrying the address by a narrow majority, the voting was regarded as equivalent to defeat in view of the numerical support which the placemen usually accorded ministerial measures. Ponsonby now rose and asked the Chief Secretary if he intended to bring forward his project again during the session. Castlereagh seemed to hesitate, but as he was about to speak Parnell interposed, saying that he did not think it proper to press for an immediate answer, though he personally advised the minister not to do so 'while the sentiments both of people and Parliament appeared so decisively against it.' Castlereagh agreed, but added that he was so convinced of the wisdom of the measure that 'whenever the House and the nation appeared to understand its merits, he should think it his duty to bring it forward.' A committee was thereupon appointed to draw up the address of thanks, and the House adjourned till the following day. An exulting crowd of admirers drew the Speaker home in his coach. Lord Chancellor Clare, who had easily carried the address in the Lords, was pursued to his house in Ely Place, where the mob broke all his windows; he told his servants to fire, and expressed the hope that his body-guard had 'winged some of them.'¹ By six o'clock in the evening the Post Office, though a Government institution, was reported to be illuminated from garrets to cellars. Later on a threatening crowd assembled outside Castlereagh's house in Merriion Street, but it was dispersed without difficulty when a few troops arrived on the scene.²

On the adjournment of the House, Castlereagh did not order

¹ Clare to Auckland, Jan. 23 : *Auck. Corr.* iv. 80. The address was carried in the Lords by 52 votes to 16. Londonderry voted with the majority. The Opposition was led by the Duke of Leinster, and supported by Lords Belmore, Charlemont, Granard, Dunsany and Powerscourt.

² Buckingham to Grenville, Jan. 24 : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 452.

his coach to return home immediately, but went to the Castle, where he despatched an account of the debate to London in a hand that bore evident traces of bodily fatigue. 'I am truly sorry it was not more favourable,' he told Portland. 'We certainly had reason to expect an attendance of 150 friends from the interests that went with us, but various causes reduced our strength to 107. Only two of Lord Downshire's and three of Lord Ely's appeared. Several stayed away on whom we had reason to count, and others who had promised their support left us in the course of the debate. Lord De Clifford's members did not attend. . . . The language of the Opposition was most violent, in general denying the competence of Parliament to entertain the measure and hinting (in very intelligible terms) resistance. It was met with decision, but the zeal and clamour of our opponents gave them a manifest advantage.'¹ Castlereagh felt that on this occasion his judgment had been at fault and that the forces working against him were much greater than he had imagined. Grenville on hearing the news in London was quick to criticise. 'I am much more mortified than surprised at the event of the House of Commons debate on the Union,' he wrote to his brother; 'for though Lord Castlereagh wrote (as he talked) with confidence, yet one saw very clearly the elements of ratting.'² It was not unnatural that Castlereagh should have felt rather disheartened, though he came down to the House next day resolutely determined to resist any alteration in the address.

4

Meanwhile popular excitement was increasing. On the 24th College Green and the adjacent thoroughfares were thronged from an early hour with shouting and gesticulating crowds. Both parties in Parliament put forward every exertion to muster a stouter following for the second day's debate. Cooke is said to have surpassed himself in his efforts to gain over waverers. Marshall made himself conspicuous by similar activities about the entrances to the House, and later in the day another Government

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 23 : H.O. Ireland, 85.

² Grenville to Buckingham, Jan. 28 : Buckingham, *op. cit.* ii. 429.

whip, Captain Pakenham,¹ reverted to the methods of the press-gang, with which he was evidently familiar, and actually hauled in some members bodily as they were in the act of leaving the building.² The business for the day was to consider the report from the Committee which had been appointed to draw up the address of thanks for the King's Speech. As its mover on the previous day, Lord Tyrone now read the address as drawn up. When he came to the paragraph relating to the Union his words were greeted with hostile shouts from the Opposition benches, but he was eventually permitted to finish. The ensuing debate was conducted on the vital question of expunging this paragraph from the address.

On this occasion Sir Lawrence Parsons had been chosen to lead for the Opposition. In his opening speech he advanced most effectively the popular argument that Government was seeking to annihilate the national Parliament and betray the country now that Ireland was weak from civil war and overrun with troops. He was immediately answered by the Chief Secretary, who spoke with unusual heat. As an attack upon the Opposition tactics Castlereagh's speech has generally been considered to be an excellent counterblast to Plunket's diatribes on the previous day. Even Barrington admitted that it 'was severe beyond anything heard within the walls of Parliament and far exceeded the powers he was supposed to possess.'³ But an inadequate report is far from being a sufficient medium to convey the impression which it apparently created. (Castlereagh thought too much of his speeches ever to revise any of them for subsequent publication, while the reporters thought too little of them to reproduce them in any detail.) The minister was not afraid to charge the Opposition on this occasion with preventing the free discussion of an important topic by 'round robins, cabals and party tricks.' The round robins were composed of 'disappointed wrangling barristers and pettifogging attornies.' He mentioned in particular Bowes Daly, who in the lobby during the division on the former debate had attempted to pledge the whole minority to act together

¹ Thomas Pakenham (1757-1836), third son of the 1st Lord Longford, M.P. for Longford and a Captain in the Royal Navy. He married Louisa Augusta Staples, granddaughter of William Conolly and first cousin of Lady Castlereagh.

² Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 246. ³ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 249.

as a party, proposing that no person should accept any of the offices which should be vacated in consequence of the present question.¹ He continued in the following strain :

‘ The present Opposition is a cabal—a desperate faction composed of men who agree in no one measure of public good. Last session they pronounced Parliament lost to every sense of public duty ; some of them declared that they were ashamed to remain in it, and seceded in the hour of danger. Now that the storm of rebellion is over, they have rushed back again from the places to which they shrank. Though their conduct was such in the season of danger, they have now advanced with a more confident step than those other gentlemen on this side of the House who risked their lives and fortunes to save their country from the attempts of foreign and domestic enemies.’

He therefore advised the country gentlemen who had so nobly exerted themselves ‘ not to be seen in the same ranks with such men.’ He accused Grattan and Ponsonby by name of endeavouring to assimilate the government of Ireland to that of France by carving the country into departments, and he expressed his astonishment that in the frenzy of the moment a number of honourable members ‘ had been seduced into such strange company.’ He defended the action of the Government in dismissing some of its servants, since it merely exercised a constitutional right. (‘ The British Constitution does not consider places under the Crown as mere annuities for the emolument of the possessors.’) He submitted that the declaration he had made with regard to not pressing forward the proposed measure of Union under the present sentiment of the House ought to be satisfactory, and that the persisting in any motion after such a declaration ‘ could only tend to further the views of those who had shown on every occasion that they had more at heart the objects of their own ambition than the real interests of the country.’ At the same time he announced his intention and that of his colleagues not to lose sight of the measure, and he categorically denied the rumour that it was to be carried by military force. ‘ Resolved as I am,’ he said, ‘ never to be deterred by cabal from offering any measure to the discussion of Parliament, I never could embark in so absurd a scheme as to conceive it possible to intimidate or corrupt the country into any measure whatever.’

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, Jan. 25 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 48.

The Chief Secretary then proceeded to deal with an equally serious charge :

‘ There have been in the course of debate insinuations of a general nature that Ministers had employed illicit means to secure support. I pass them by as they deserve with contempt. But I have also heard particular circumstances mentioned as facts of so base and false a tenor that I will trace them to the individual, be him who he may, from whom they originate, and force him to make a public disavowal.’

Some unseemly interruptions of a personal nature evidently occurred here ; so turning to the Speaker, who had made himself notorious for his flagrant partiality in the Chair, he continued :

‘ I shall not delay the House much longer, but before I sit down, Sir, suffer me to deprecate that species of equivocal language which is neither altogether personal nor altogether parliamentary. If gentlemen conceive that any man on this side of the House has done them personal injury, let them come forward and seek redress like men ; but let them not resort to that kind of language which is just so far short of personal offence as to shelter them from personal chastisement ; let them not disgrace Parliament by introducing that which has proved fatal to the country—angry invective and illiberal personality.’

For once Castlereagh seems to have worked himself into a considerable degree of emotional excitement. George Ponsonby, who followed him in debate, was heard to observe to a friend as the minister sat down : ‘ The ravings of an irritated youth—it was very natural.’¹ Ponsonby now endeavoured to rival his friend Plunket in vituperation. He compared the Chief Secretary to ‘ a puny child,’ and referred to his evident animation as ‘ the insolence of a young man intoxicated with a station to which his talents were as ill-adapted as his years.’ He concluded this tirade of personal abuse by assuring the noble lord that ‘ we are determined to give him no peace, no respite, until we have obtained a complete renunciation of this detestable project.’

The discussion continued throughout the night to the accompaniment of unceasing clapping, hissing, groaning and shouting from the gallery. At 6.30 o’clock on the following morning the question was put ‘ that the paragraph do stand part of the Address.’ In the cold grey light of the winter dawn the Opposition trooped out into the lobby, and a breathless hush fell on the

¹ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 249.

building. The Government members who remained within the chamber were counted to the number of one hundred and six ; but when the doors were opened Sir Lawrence Parsons and Denis Bowes Daly, the Opposition tellers, marched in at the head of one hundred and eleven so-called patriots.¹ When these figures were announced from the Chair round after round of cheering broke out, which immediately spread to the anxiously waiting crowds outside in College Green.

It so happened that proceedings terminated with a significant incident which inspired the Chief Secretary with fresh hope. As the House was about to adjourn Ponsonby, who wished to push his victory a step further and make the ministerial discomfiture complete, rose and said that in order to prevent such an obnoxious measure as legislative Union from again being brought forward in that assembly, he would now move a resolution in the words of his amendment which had been rejected the night before—this pledged the House to maintain the independent legislature granted to the country by virtue of the Constitution of '82. Castlereagh immediately jumped to his feet and protested against such an unconstitutional attempt to bind the House, pointing out that he had brought forward this measure 'in compliance with the duties of his situation, and with no other view than the mutual advantage of both countries and the general wealth, strength and prosperity of the Empire.' He seized the opportunity of warning honourable members that, though opposed to it now, the time might come when they would look to the measure as essential to their safety.

According to Barrington's report, when the Speaker put the question only the Chief Secretary and the Attorney-General (Toler) dissented.² In accordance with custom the Speaker now requested Ponsonby to write his motion down. Whilst the Opposition leader was doing this at the table, there was a profound silence during which time members were able to reflect upon the significance of Ponsonby's action. At last Ponsonby finished writing and confidently handed up his motion to the Chair. On the question again being put several of the country members, as well as John Claudius Beresford, rose and declared that, although in accordance with the wishes of their constituents they now opposed the measure, they did not wish to bind themselves

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xviii. 13.

² Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 253.

against it *for ever*—they therefore proclaimed their determination to vote against Ponsonby's resolution.¹ Ponsonby thereupon decided that in view of his recent narrow majority it would be unwise to risk another division. He lamented 'that the smallest contrariety of opinion should have arisen amongst men who ought to be united by the most powerful of all inducements, the salvation of their independence. He perceived, however, a wish that he should not press the motion founded, he supposed, on a mistaken confidence in the engagements of the noble Lord *that he would not again bring forward that ruinous measure without the decided approbation of the people and the Parliament*. Though he must doubt the sincerity of the Minister's engagements, he could not hesitate to acquiesce in the wishes of his friends and he would therefore withdraw his motion.'

For the moment the Opposition was taken aback, and Ponsonby realised that he had committed a tactical blunder. As Lord Chancellor Clare characteristically put it, 'this malignant knave has been in the event the best friend of Government under the circumstances in which they stood.'² Castlereagh was equally satisfied. 'The impression of the second debate was more favourable than its issue,' he wrote to Portland later the same day. 'It was argued with effect by our friends that the disinclination of the House to adopt Mr. Ponsonby's resolution is a tacit though not a recorded assent to the future agitation of the subject.'³ With that the House adjourned for a week, though not without another assurance from the Chief Secretary that he would not bring forward the measure 'so long as it appeared repugnant to the sense of Parliament and the country.'

The town was illuminated a second time and the mob again ran riot. 'We are yet a nation,' wrote the dying Charlemont to his old friend, 'the abominable project is defeated. I can think and talk of nothing else. . . . This delightful event has braced my nerves, and added ten healthy years to my life.'⁴ The

¹ These members were W. C. Fortescue (Louth County), Lord Cole (Fermanagh County), Hon. A. Acheson (Armagh County), Hon. J. Maxwell (Newtown Limavady), J. C. Beresford (Dublin City), and A. French (Roscommon County).

² Clare to Auckland, Jan. 25 : *Auck. Corr.* iv. 85.

³ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 25 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 133.

⁴ Charlemont to Haliday, Jan. 25 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 344.

Opposition met jubilantly in the Speaker's house, and bets were freely laid in Daly's Club that Cornwallis and Castlereagh would be out of office within a month and Parnell and the others reinstated.¹ The following announcement appeared in *The Anti-Union* :

‘ NAUTICAL INTELLIGENCE.

‘ On Friday, the 25th of January, at half an hour past six in the morning, was lost at the entrance of Dublin Harbour the armed cutter *The Union*, Capt. PITT. She struck on the Bar on the 22nd, and was at that time saved by the extraordinary force of one man only ; but was dashed to pieces *under Ireland's Eye* on the 25th—The Captain himself was not on board : but she was commanded by a *Master and Commander* who was a very *young Master* indeed ; and she was bilged by some sharp rocks which were not discovered owing to the young Master's being *out in his soundings*. But what contributed much to the loss of the vessel was the impudence of superceding in the midst of the storm some of the oldest and ablest navigators, and putting incapable young officers in their place. . . . ’²

The defeat of the Government was attributed to various causes by the interested parties. The Lord-Lieutenant blamed it on chance : three prominent Unionist members were absent ill, others failed to appear, and the Opposition obtained some unexpected recruits from the country.³ The Castle officials and the Protestant Ascendancy Party blamed the Lord-Lieutenant. ‘ Lord Cornwallis is nobody, worse than nobody,’ wrote Cooke. ‘ I assert what I foretold, that his silly conduct, his total incapacity, selfishness and mulishness has alone lost the question.’⁴ Buckingham, who, as has been seen, bore the Chief Secretary little goodwill, was obliged to admit that ‘ Lord Castlereagh has really worked like a horse, but his principal is a dead weight that bears down everything.’⁵ Cornwallis had never been popular with the local administration. The reactionary clique, led by the Chancellor, the Attorney-General, the Speaker and Beresford, considered that by showing such lenience to the rebels

¹ Carysfort to Grenville, Feb. 5 : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 467.

² *The Anti-Union*, Feb. 2 (No. 17).

³ Cornwallis to Portland, Jan. 25 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 49.

⁴ Cooke to Auckland, Jan. 26 : *Auck. Corr.* iv. 83.

⁵ Buckingham to Grenville, Jan. 23 : *Dropmore Papers*, iv. 451.

as he had done he had effectually alienated a large section of the loyalists, and by refusing to take the 'cabinet' and the leading individuals in the country into his confidence he had spoiled any hopes of success which the proposed measure of Union may have originally possessed. The Chief Secretary, though endowed with indomitable courage and a stronger will than his principal, was already beginning to share some of his odium with the Ascendancy zealots for the same reasons, and moreover he was also suspected of favouring Catholic concessions.¹

Castlereagh was more accurate than his colleague in diagnosing the causes of opposition. First there was the treachery of a number of borough proprietors who had promised their support. The same neglect characterised the conduct of others upon whom he had good reason to rely for assistance. 'Some absolutely deceived us,' he wrote; 'others from whom we had expectations were deterred by the appearance of disturbance in the metropolis, and even by personal threats: but what seemed to operate most unfavourably was the warmth of the country gentlemen, who spoke in great numbers and with much energy against the question.'² The Opposition in the House of Commons was, with the exception of the Speaker, Parnell and the Ponsonbys, composed of country gentlemen (so he explained to Portland), and the belief that after the Union each county would send only one instead of two members to Parliament had undoubtedly decided the majority of their votes. Then on account of the extensive official business which had kept him in Dublin since his return from England, it had been impossible for him as Chief Secretary to establish personal communication with any but a few of these individuals, and although he had written to every one of them on the subject, many did not come up to town till the day of the first debate, which prevented him from seeing them till he met them at the House. Repugnant as they might feel towards the principle of Union on the ground of personal interest, Castlereagh did not imagine that they would resist its discussion by clamour. But the issue had turned out contrary to his expectations 'and the country gentlemen, as if they had been engaged in a fox-hunt instead of a debate on a most momentous question, seemed to contend who

¹ Percy to his wife, Feb. 6: Percy MSS. (B.M. Add. 32, 335).

² Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 28: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 143.

would indulge most loudly in an outcry too frequently unconstitutional.' ¹

In a private letter to Pitt written at this time he indicated the immense difficulties with which they were faced :

' In fact neither the weight of Government nor the necessity of the measure on public grounds has proved equal to contend against the combination of private interests which oppose it, supported as it is by a strong popular faction out of doors. We have the county interests naturally against us—the borough proprietors are against us—the majority of the barristers composing one-sixth of the House and the contrast of the attornies in combination are against us—the unconnected individuals, who have speculated upon the low price of seats, are against us. It will appear upon calculation that not less than a million of money in value has been operating against us, if you estimate the several species of private interests which are supposed to be affected by the measure. Whether the representation could be differently cast so as to diminish this obstacle deserves your attention, as it must ever be an uphill game to contend such natural impediments, particularly when the opposition has such a distinguished leader as the Speaker to rally round. . . . ' ²

In writing to Portland, Castlereagh expanded the idea contained in the last sentence quoted above in his letter to the Prime Minister. He suggested that the county representation should be left as it was, and that the principle of pecuniary compensation should be adopted with regard to those boroughs which it would be necessary to disfranchise in order to keep the Irish membership of the United Parliament within the numerical limit of one hundred as originally proposed.³ In this suggestion lay the secret of success, and the English ministers immediately realised its wisdom. At the same time Castlereagh informed the Home Secretary that in view of the temper of Parliament and the country it would be impossible to reagitate the question during the session with any advantage, and indeed he had grave doubts whether it should be tried again in the present Parliament, ' unless its leading interests can be prevailed on to embark more heartily in its support.' ⁴

The opening proceedings at Westminster had gone off smoothly,

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 25, 28 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 133, 142.

² Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 30 : Pitt MSS. 327.

³ See above, p. 287.

⁴ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 25, 28 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 133, 144.

and the King's message recommending a Union had passed without a division. In spite of the bad news from College Green, Pitt brought forward his resolutions a few days later. He made a most elaborate speech in doing so, and one of his admirers asserted that it 'surpassed even the most sanguine expectation of his friends and perhaps even any former exhibition of parliamentary eloquence,' though a Whig member of the Opposition who heard him speak for the first time declared 'there was gout in it.'¹ At all events the apt Vergilian quotation of Æneas's vow for an everlasting compact between the Trojans and the Italians with equal freedom and laws reminded the House of the minister at his best, and members obligingly approved his resolutions by a substantial majority.² Castlereagh was the first to realise that this speech constituted one of the most powerful and comprehensive statements of the case for the Union, and he immediately had ten thousand copies of it printed for public circulation in Ireland. 'This disclosure from authority,' he wrote to Pitt, 'will tend, if anything can, to allay the false fire of this giddy country.'³

If Castlereagh entertained some misgivings that the voting at College Green on the 23rd and 25th of January would reflect discreditably upon his parliamentary competence, they were speedily dispelled when he learned of the unanimous opinion which Pitt and the other English ministers pronounced on the conduct he had displayed in two extraordinarily lengthy, violent and exhausting debates. Portland and Camden in particular wrote enthusiastic letters of praise;⁴ and Elliot, who was sent over to London shortly afterwards to discuss future plans, bore out their testimony to his merits. 'I cannot describe to you the pleasure I feel at finding that all your exertions have been justly appreciated here,' wrote the Under-Secretary to his Chief on arriving at Whitehall, 'and that you stand as high as possible in the esteem and confidence both of the Ministers and of the public.'⁵ Thus encouraged the Chief Secretary from his office

¹ Auckland to Beresford, Feb. 2 : *Auck. Corr.* iv. 87 ; *Beresford Corr.* ii. 207. *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 254-292.

² 140 to 15 : *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 321 (Jan. 31).

³ Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 30 : Pitt MSS. 327.

⁴ Camden to Castlereagh, Jan. 26. Portland to Castlereagh, Jan. 29 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 137, 145.

⁵ Elliot to Castlereagh, Feb. 2 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 161.

in Dublin Castle proceeded to sketch a more thoroughgoing scheme of preparing the way for the public reception of a measure which both the English ministers and himself considered indispensable in the interests of mutual national security. 'For most assuredly,' he told Wickham, 'the language and conduct both without and within doors has been such on the late occasion as to satisfy every thinking man that, if the countries are not speedily incorporated, they will ere long be committed against each other.'¹

5

Within a week of the rejection of the proposed measure of Union at College Green, Castlereagh had drawn up and despatched to Whitehall a skilful and accurate analysis of the hostile interests which he considered were operating against its future chances of success.² 'Exclusive of the difficulties naturally attendant on a measure so novel and so important as a Union,' he observed at the beginning of this memorandum, 'it is worth examining in what degree private interest has obviously opposed an obstacle to its success ; with a view as well of considering how far by a variation of the arrangement this weighty impediment may be removed, as of judging on more certain principles with what hopes of a more favourable event it may be revived on a future occasion.' He classified the elements of opposition as follows :

1. *Borough Proprietors* whose property must obviously suffer a diminution of value by the proposed arrangement.

2. *County Interests* in the event of only one member from each county being returned to the United Parliament, since half would be excluded and the other half exposed to new election contests.

3. *Barristers* in the Irish Parliament, since they regarded a Union as depriving them of the best means of personal advancement.

4. *Purchasers of seats* in the present Parliament, since the surrender of these seats before the end of the normal parliamentary term would involve individual financial loss.

5. *Individuals connected with Dublin* whose property such as houses, land, canal shares, etc., would depreciate.

In assessing the value of these interests it may be noted that he placed the counties on a par with the boroughs, justifying this

¹ Castlereagh to Wickham, Feb. 4 : H.O. Ireland, 85.

² Londonderry MSS. ; H.O. Ireland, 85 ; *Cast. Corr.* ii. 149-153.

common basis of valuation on the ground that with regard to the former 'the superior pride of the situation counterbalances its uncertainty.'

1.	108 Boroughs	at £7,000 each	-	-	£756,000
2.	32 Counties	at £7,000 each	-	-	224,000
3.	50 Barristers	at £4,000 each	-	-	200,000
4.	50 Purchasers	at £1,500 each	-	-	75,000
5.	Dublin Influence (say)	-	-	-	200,000
					<hr/>
					£1,455,000

He did not consider it necessary to take into consideration 'the opposition given to the measure out of doors in any other point of view than as affording the members within a more plausible and popular pretence for acting upon their own private feelings.'

It was quite clear that at present neither the mere prestige of the local administration nor the intrinsic merits of the proposed legislative union were capable of overcoming such a powerful vested opposition as the Chief Secretary had outlined. 'What measure of national advantage,' he asked, 'could prevail on the individuals of whom Parliament is composed to sacrifice a million and a half of their own private property for the public benefit? National calamity or popular authority might compel them to do so; but the danger must be more imminent and their preservation be more obvious and immediately connected than it is, or else the popular authority must be very strong indeed before they will yield their private to their public feelings.' In these circumstances he reiterated the advice which he had tendered to Portland in a previous letter that the county representation should remain unaltered and that the principle of pecuniary compensation should be applied to totally disfranchised boroughs. He suggested that the 'open' boroughs (*i.e.* boroughs in which the right of election was not in the corporations) should send one member each to the United Parliament and that the rest should be completely disfranchised. This differentiation was based on the opinion that a patron with a municipal charter in his possession had a more substantial claim to compensation than the proprietor of an open borough whose influence, though it might be overwhelming, was

not in every case complete.¹ The Home Secretary pronounced himself well satisfied with Castlereagh's account of 'the different descriptions of persons whose interests dispose them to be adverse to the measure,' 'the causes of their opposition,' and 'the means of removing them' which he had so 'judiciously and satisfactorily pointed out.'² The consequence was that his 'very interesting and ingenious' scheme was adopted and formed the ultimate basis of representation in the Imperial Parliament.

The next question for the Chief Secretary to consider was the situation of the Catholics and the means whereby their support could be made certain. By reason of the Relief Act of 1793, which had admitted them to the franchise, they were able to control parliamentary elections in all counties and many open boroughs (except in Ulster), and they could therefore prevent those who were unfavourable to their interests from being returned to the House of Commons, and were capable of exerting powerful indirect influence on the fortunes of the Union measure. There was indeed a danger that the Opposition in Parliament, which was already making overtures, would win them over to its side with promises of emancipation without a Union. However, since the dissolution of the Catholic Committee, at whose head were Byrne and Keogh, there had been no acknowledged head of the Catholic community, and as a body the Catholics did not work together in such harmony as formerly. The democratic element in Dublin was most likely to fall in with the Opposition; but the bishops and leading gentry, who were anxious for a measure of State provision for their clergy, inclined to support Government and a Union, and were content to leave the settlement of their principal political grievance to the Imperial Parliament. Since the previous autumn Cooke had to a certain extent severed himself from the Protestant Ascendancy partisans and under his chief's influence was for admitting the Catholics to the legislature after the Union. 'If Mr. Pitt would undertake that and we could reconcile it to our friends here,' he wrote to Auckland, 'we might be sure of the point.'³

¹ Project for the Representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 58. Porritt, ii. 489.

² Portland to Cornwallis, March 8 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 202.

³ Cooke to Auckland, Jan. 15 : *Auck. Corr.* iv. 77.

Pitt's views on this subject had made a profound impression on Castlereagh's mind, and in reality formed the foundation of his policy. In his speech at Westminster on January 31 the Prime Minister said :

‘ Without anticipating the discussion, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable. First, when the conduct of the Catholics shall be such as shall make it safe for the Government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion, and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure—when these events take place, it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in an Imperial United Parliament with much greater safety than it could be in a separate Legislature. In the second place, I think it certain that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary after the Union to withhold from the Catholics the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed if the Protestant Legislature were no longer separate and local but general and Imperial ; and the Catholics themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint.’¹

Castlereagh now suggested that the Catholics might be brought forward as a body in support of the Union if all existing disabilities affecting them as Catholics, such as exclusion from certain enumerated offices,² were repealed by the legislative act of incorporation, since their leaders were now showing a disposition to treat with Government. He agreed with Pitt that the question of their admission to Parliament must be left to the consideration of the united legislature. ‘ Sure I am,’ he told Elliot, ‘ that support could not be secured on safer terms.’³ For the present he thought that in view of the ceaseless activity of the Opposition, it was for the English Cabinet to say how far it would authorise the Irish Government to hold out encouragements to the Catholics in order to keep them separate from the Opposition and interest them in favour of the measure. But on this point the minds of the majority were made up, and the more liberal views of Pitt, Dundas and Castlereagh were overruled. Portland's instructions to the Lord-Lieutenant made the position clear. There was to be no

¹ *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 272.

² *i.e.* offices reserved for Protestants by the Act of 1793.

³ Castlereagh to Elliot, Jan. 28 : H.O. Ireland, 85.

treaty. The Union must be pressed forward with all despatch in the country, and at the same time the Catholics must be given to understand that all questions connected with their emancipation would be considered by the United Parliament. No further encouragement was to be given to the Catholics till Castlereagh had consulted with some of the leading characters in Ireland and reported their opinions to Whitehall. 'A Union is as indispensably necessary for the purpose of affording them a reasonable probability of being admitted to a full participation of rights in common with the Protestants,' wrote the Home Secretary, 'as it is to remove and quiet those apprehensions which are at present entertained of them on account of the superiority of their numbers.' The Cabinet was not, however, opposed to the payment of the Catholic priests by the State, and it was intimated to Cornwallis that a fair-minded proposal under this head would receive the benediction of Whitehall.¹

Castlereagh was able to reconcile these instructions to his own opinions with little difficulty. 'I conceive the true policy is,' he admitted to Portland, 'by a steady resistance of their claims so long as the countries remain separate to make them feel that they can be carried only with us through a Union.'² The leading Catholics were not displeased with this line of policy, and they promised to do what they could to help forward the measure. Their influence with the mass of their followers was soon perceptible. Isaac Corry, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had to vacate his seat at Newry on acceptance of office, owed his re-election entirely to the Catholic voters, 'who stuck together like a Macedonian phalanx.'³ Dr. Moylan, the titular Bishop of Cork, considered a Union indispensable to extinguish local feuds and animosities, and Dr. Troy, the metropolitan Archbishop, strove with effect to prevent the agitation of any claims for emancipation which might embarrass the Government.⁴ Within a few weeks of the reopening of these negotiations the

¹ Portland to Cornwallis, Feb. 3 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 156-157 ; *id.* Feb. 12 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 63. Minto to Windham, Feb. 7 : *Windham Papers*, ii. 93.

² Castlereagh to Portland, Feb. 9 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 171.

³ Dr. Lennan to Dr. Troy, Feb. 7 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 168.

⁴ Dr. Moylan to Pelham, March 9 : Pelham MSS. ; Gilbert, 205. Troy to Sir C. Hippisley, Feb. 9 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 171.

Lord-Lieutenant was gratified to find that a large proportion of the Catholics were now in favour of the measure.¹

A further problem which faced Castlereagh was one of parliamentary tactics, namely, how to deal effectively with any fresh attempt which might be made to introduce a motion in the House of Commons equivalent to Ponsonby's on January 25 with the object of closing the Union question for ever or at least of preventing its reagitation for a considerable time to come. On February 14 Lord Corry moved for a committee on the state of the nation, and his motion was calculated to range the country gentry permanently on the side of the Opposition with such an object in view.² At the outset a private member, much to Castlereagh's disgust, persisted in demanding his right to have the gallery cleared 'in order to prevent a repetition of those indecencies which were committed in a former debate a few nights since by strangers.' As the part of the chamber in question contained 'a great assemblage of the handsomest women in Dublin,' and others who had come to hear the Minister's declaration of policy, honourable members took a hint from Castlereagh (most of them had a spark of vanity in their characters) and temporarily suspended the standing rule that on the suggestion of any member the gallery should be cleared.³ In the ensuing discussion the Chief Secretary replied to Lord Corry with his usual energy, and repeated his assertion that the Government did not intend to persevere with the measure at present, that in fact 'the measure was for the moment laid asleep till the temper of Parliament made it expedient to revive it.'⁴

Corry was not an experienced parliamentary tactician, and although he intended to provoke a discussion upon the merits of the Union he made his motion in general terms. Castlereagh immediately seized this opening to score a point in debate. 'To resolve into a committee without any specific object proposed,' he pointed out, 'is to resolve the House into a debating society,

¹ E. Littlehales to Donoughmore, April 1 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 84.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 19.

³ Alexander to Pelham, Feb. 15 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 106).

⁴ Castlereagh's comment on this statement to the Home Secretary was : 'I hope your Grace will be of opinion that I have not in any degree fettered the discretion of either Government.' Castlereagh to Portland, Feb. 15 : H.O. Ireland, 85.

where every man without method or order may utter such inflammatory matter as he pleases ; where much mischief may be done ; whence no advantage can be derived.' Corry now hastened to propose an address to the King desiring His Majesty's interposition with his ministers to induce them to abandon the measure at issue. The purpose of this address, as Castlereagh was careful to explain to Portland, ' certainly was an endeavour to pledge the Parliament irrevocably against the measure and to shut up the question for ever.' The country gentlemen as a whole refused to commit themselves in such an obviously foolish manner, and after an all-night sitting the Government came off triumphantly with a majority of twenty. (The voting was one hundred and twenty-three to one hundred and three, though an hour before the division a member of the Opposition declared that his side had a majority of five.) It was another encouraging sign ; and though there was still much need to tread warily, Castlereagh was now quite convinced that ' the great body of the Opposition is completely open to support the question at a future day if it can be reconciled to their personal interests.' ¹

6

Throughout the remainder of the session Castlereagh experienced little real difficulty in any of the parliamentary business which it fell to his lot as minister to introduce. The Opposition, disconcerted at its failure to detach the country gentlemen from their allegiance to authority on any other subject but that of Union, grew more and more effete as a whole, and its leaders gradually abandoned their obstructionist policy.

The state of the country now called for official attention. News that the French were fitting out another Irish expedition in Brest served to stimulate guerilla hostilities which had never been completely suppressed. ' The system of houghing cattle has been carried to such an extent,' observed Castlereagh at this time, ' as to induce the most serious alarm, and the country in general is much infested by small parties of banditti who at night plunder the gentry and farmers and commit the most horrid cruelties.' ²

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, Feb. 15 : H.O. Ireland, 85. Cornwallis to Portland, Feb. 16 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 64.

² Castlereagh to Portland, March 11 : H.O. Ireland, 86.

Although the civil courts were now open, the country was still theoretically under martial law. In order therefore to prevent a clash of jurisdictions in the event of renewed activity in the military courts and also to consolidate the Lord-Lieutenant's authority, a Martial Law Bill was brought forward by the Attorney-General. What appears to have been a very interesting debate upon its second reading took place in the House of Commons, where 'an attempt was made to unite all the persons who had voted against the Union in opposition to it.' That it eventually passed without a division was attributed by the Lord-Lieutenant to his Chief Secretary's intervention.¹ The occasion gave Castlereagh an opportunity of defending Cornwallis's administration against the charge of excessive leniency as compared with that of his predecessor. He contended that the coercive measures which were adopted under the preceding administration were necessary on the breaking out of the rebellion for its suppression, and that this system had only been relaxed *after* the rebels had been subdued in the field.

'I seldom speak as to individuals,' wrote Cooke after listening to the Chief Secretary's speech, 'but I think it my duty to say that Lord Castlereagh's conduct and abilities in the House have of late been very conspicuous and it is my opinion that in a very short period he will be the best speaker in the Parliament.'² It so happened that this particular speech was subsequently misrepresented in London as being in fact a censure upon Camden under the guise of a compliment to Cornwallis.³ Camden adverted to this topic in an interesting letter in which he complimented his nephew on his finesse and discussed their mutual difficulties *vis-à-vis* the Lord-Lieutenant.

'Secret and Confidential.

WILDERNESSE, 21st March, 1799.

'... After assuring you that I never entertained any other opinion of the line you took than that of its being kind towards me and judicious in your situation and informing you that I believe the insinuations which were communicated to you and to me came from

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, Feb. 28 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 70 ; *Cast. Corr.* ii. 192.

² Cooke to Wickham, Feb. 28 : H.O. Ireland, 85. I have not been able to discover a newspaper report of this speech. See below, pp. 419 *et seq.*

³ Wickham to Castlereagh, March 4 : H.O. Ireland, 86 ; London-derry MSS.

discontented persons, I will tell you fairly that the situation in which you were placed upon that question was not much less difficult than others out of which you have extricated yourself so honourably ; for as *there has been a deviation* from the line I had adopted, it certainly required much address and ability to prove there had not.

‘I am convinced Lord C[ornwallis] came into Ireland in a settled bad opinion of all the old advisers of Government and a determination to estrange himself from them, with a strong leniency to the Catholics and a prejudice against the Orangemen. He also came at a moment when measures of lenity could have been carried into execution with advantage, which induced him to form the hope and to attempt to execute the plan of restoring the country to peace by carrying that system to a greater extent than I am sure either you or others of his friends quite approved of. And the insinuations thrown out against the Yeomanry, an institution founded by me, could not be otherwise construed by the friends of that institution than as a disapprobation of that conduct they had been suffered to pursue before. And yet this change of system crept so by degrees into his conduct that I do not think it was possible for you under the circumstances in which you stood to represent *seriously* against it. And it was equally difficult for the ministry here, although they saw and felt that Lord Cornwallis was *not* acting exactly as they liked, to send him an instruction to change his conduct. . . .’¹

Towards the end of the session in April the Opposition made a final effort to rally its ranks in support of an important legislative measure brought forward by one of its principal members. This was a Regency Bill, which was ostensibly intended to prevent the recurrence of such a constitutional crisis as had taken place in 1789.² Fitzgerald, the late Prime Serjeant, who introduced it in the Commons, proposed to enact that the person who was *ipso facto* Regent of England should be always with the same powers Regent *de jure* in Ireland. Since this measure if passed would remove one of the strongest arguments against the continuation of an independent legislature, the Government disliked its principle but thought it wise to let it proceed to the committee stage. The Chief Secretary welcomed the discussion, which it was one of the Opposition objects to provoke. ‘I confess I look upon its introduction as rather a fortunate circumstance,’ he wrote to Portland. ‘The difficulties which this measure involves will

¹ Londonderry MSS. The version of this letter given in *Cast. Corr.* iii. 272 (misdated April 11, 1800) is incomplete and inaccurate.

² See above, p. 23.

most strongly illustrate the endless embarrassments arising from our distinct legislatures, and will afford an excellent opportunity of re-arguing the question of Union divested of the declamatory topics which are always pressed forward on the main discussion. Unless the proposers of the Bill are prepared to surrender up the entire authority on this point to the English Parliament and to suffer what they term a foreign legislature to impose the restrictions upon the Regent of this Kingdom so as to apply and adapt them to the particular frame of the Irish Government, they never can extricate themselves from the absurdity which a contrary principle involves. If they do then we cease to be an independent legislature and the Parliament of Great Britain will legislate for Ireland on an important question of internal arrangement.' ¹

The discussion in Committee gave the Speaker his long-wished-for chance of delivering his political sentiments at large. His speech was 'of above four hours' duration, embracing an infinite variety of topics and delivered with animation and ability,' reported Castlereagh. 'It was the speech of an able partisan in a bad cause, everything sacrificed to popular impression; but well calculated to impress every class of men with aversion to the measure of Union.' ² It was immediately published, and ran to one hundred and thirteen closely-printed pages. ³ Haliday on reading it confessed that the Speaker's words revived his drooping heart, and concluded that they must irritate 'even to rage the soi-disant Messiah of Irish salvation,' as he now referred to his old friend Robert. ⁴

Foster's chief point was that the constitution of 1782 was final. 'It was undoubtedly final,' admitted Castlereagh in his reply, 'as to the subserviency of the Irish to the British Legislature; but as to all other questions of intercourse, of policy, of reciprocal benefit and advantage between the two Kingdoms it could not be final; it was not so in its nature, and it was the height of absurdity to argue that it was.' If the Chief Secretary's speech on this occasion gained his cause no fresh converts within the House, it

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, March 11 : H.O. Ireland, 86.

² Castlereagh to Portland, April 12 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 270.

³ *Speech of the Rt. Hon. J. Foster delivered on April 11, 1799* (Dublin 1799).

⁴ Haliday to Charlemont, April 15 : *Charl. Corr.* ii. 349.

made a very real impression upon the country and the outside public.¹

‘No man (he said) could overlook the danger which resulted from two independent legislatures in the great questions of peace, of war, of general trade and commerce, and of treaties with foreign nations, not to mention the difficulties which arose from the Admiralty jurisdiction, and the great subject of our religious establishment which must be regulated on imperial principles. As to the first of these questions—the question of peace and war—what was not to be apprehended on the subject, under our state of separate legislatures? How was it possible to conceive that the Empire could continue as at present, whilst all parts of it were to receive equal protection and only one part of it to suffer the burdens of that protection? Must we not of necessity and in justice look to some settlement of imperial contribution? And so soon as a system of contribution should be established, was there any question of peace or war which would not agitate every part of the country? . . .

What then is the security for the connection of the two Kingdoms? Is it the discretion of the Irish Parliament? No man had a higher respect than himself for the prudence, the liberality and the loyalty of its members. But had not that discretion already failed in so remarkable an instance as to prove that it was at best but a bad security? It was against the principle of human nature that one country should voluntarily or regularly follow the dictates of another; it was against the common principles of pride and independence which must ever grow and increase with the importance of the Kingdom. In proportion therefore to our wealth and strength the principle of discretion would be weakened, and the sole security for the continuance of our connection would vanish.’

The Regency Bill was postponed till after the close of the session, and its virtual rejection was Castlereagh’s first great parliamentary achievement, affording as it did a source of much encouragement to his followers.² But in spite of the Opposition’s loss of heart, its leaders succeeded in striking a damaging blow at the Government prestige owing to an unfortunate incident which occurred shortly before the prorogation. Colonel Cole, a strong anti-Unionist, who represented Enniskillen Borough in the House of Commons, had been ordered to join his regiment abroad. In order to vacate his seat he therefore applied to the

¹ *Report of the Speeches delivered by Viscount Castlereagh in the debate on the Regency Bill* (Dublin, 1799). *Belfast News-Letter*, April 16, 19.

² *H. of C. Journals*, xviii. 115.

Chief Secretary that he might be appointed to the Escheatorship of Munster, the nominal office which corresponded to the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds in England. As it was understood in the Castle that his seat was to be filled by a particularly obnoxious opponent of the Union, 'who had publicly treated the recommendation from the Throne with marked and unconstitutional disrespect,' Castlereagh (acting on the Lord-Lieutenant's instructions) took the extraordinary though not unprecedented course of refusing Cole's application.¹ A similar application was also refused from a member who had publicly proposed to sell his seat to anyone who would vote against the Union. The question was raised in the House of Commons on the official motion for adjournment, and the Chief Secretary was attacked with considerable rancour by the Opposition leaders, who invited him to admit that in the case of Colonel Cole his action was due to the knowledge that the member's proposed successor was unfavourable to Union.² 'Let the House adjourn,' said Ponsonby, 'but let it be remembered that the noble Lord is at the head of a great army, let it be understood that the object of the noble Lord is to *pack* the Parliament for the purpose of carrying a vote in favour of his measure, and to enforce the vote of that packed Parliament by that army.'

The Law Officers defended the action as being within the undoubted prerogative of the Crown, and advised the Chief Secretary to ignore any interrogatories on the subject which might be put to him. Castlereagh wisely followed this advice, but at the end of the evening he rose and in an extremely clever speech raked up every disreputable feature in Ponsonby's political past. Ponsonby's attempt to reply was greeted with shouts of 'Spoke !' 'Spoke !' from the Opposition benches, and Castlereagh had the satisfaction of seeing his motion to adjourn carried by fifteen votes.³ This division was, however, regarded as a narrow escape for Government, since the general feeling was that the spirit of the constitution had been strained. It is significant that Portland now instructed the Lord-Lieutenant that for the future it would

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, May 19 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 99.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, May 21. *Debate in the Irish House of Commons on the 15th of May 1799* (Dublin, 1799).

³ 47 to 33 : *H. of C. Journals*, xviii. 144.

be better to follow the rule observed in England of granting a nominal office without regard to the politics of the individual who requested it. As for Castlereagh's conduct during the debate on the motion for adjournment, the Home Secretary added, 'it seems to have been not only highly proper but correct in the extreme, and such as must reflect as much honour upon him as an individual as in his public capacity.'¹ Thus ended a tempestuous and exhausting session. The motion for adjournment to which reference has been made was till June 1, the date fixed by authority for the prorogation of Parliament. On that day the Opposition mustered almost full strength, and an angry declamation from Plunket was only cut short by the timely arrival of Black Rod.²

7

When Parliament rose for the summer recess Castlereagh felt that the Government had gained considerable ground in the direction of its great object. The real need for Union and the obstacles yet to be overcome in attaining to it have been forcibly expressed in a letter which General Hutchinson, who retained his command in spite of 'The Castlebar Races,' wrote to his friend Abercromby at this time. 'I was never so convinced of anything in politics as of the necessity of this measure,' declared the General. 'If ever there was a country unfit to govern itself it is Ireland: a corrupt aristocracy, a ferocious commonalty, a distracted government, a divided people. I solemnly believe that the great mass of every religious persuasion in this country have no wish so near their hearts as to enjoy the power of persecuting each other. The Catholic would murder the Protestant in the name of God; the Protestant would murder the Catholic in the name of law. Both sects seem to consider their common country only as an extended field of battle where each are at full liberty to display their sanguinary dexterity. The bulk of the people in my opinion are by no means averse to the Union. The south is certainly for it; the north silent; Dublin clamorous; the lawyers outrageous. The chief opposition therefore will be in

¹ Portland to Cornwallis, May 25: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 322.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, June 1: H.O. Ireland, 87.

Parliament where money and influence can do everything. But Lord Castlereagh will be deceived if he thinks he can pay the needy members of Parliament in sentences and not in cash. The fact is people are so used to be bribed in this country that they will not even do what is right or their own business, unless they are paid for it.¹

The principle of pecuniary compensation, which the English Cabinet had sanctioned with regard to the borough owners, was now in fact intended varyingly to conciliate other vested interests. Boroughs, of course, had long been regarded as private property, so that the national conscience suffered no shock when it became known that the number of these which it was proposed to disfranchise completely were to be purchased at a total price of one and a quarter million sterling. The value of a single borough for this purpose was fixed at £15,000. The largest sum paid to any individual borough owner was £52,500, which curiously enough went to Lord Downshire, one of the bitterest opponents of the Union and Castlereagh's life-long political enemy.² Patronage in the gift of the Crown was judiciously bestowed, and the more doubtful adherents of the Opposition were bought off with pickings in the Church, army, law and revenue. Creations and promotions in the peerage were promised on a liberal scale. A number of seats in the House of Commons were vacated in this manner and filled with enthusiastic supporters of the cause, while others were purchased outright from their proprietors with a view to obtaining a more amenable legislature.

Castlereagh, who was primarily responsible for the conduct of these negotiations, pursued his task fearlessly and thoroughly, and he had the able assistance of the Under-Secretaries Cooke and Marsden. Cornwallis also took a share in the business, but he frankly disliked it, and longed to kick those whom his public duty obliged him to court. 'My occupation is now of the most unpleasant nature,' he wrote in June, 'negotiating and jobbing with

¹ Hutchinson to Abercromby, June 12 : Dunfermline, 136.

² In all 84 boroughs returning 168 members were purchased for £1,260,000. For list of these boroughs and their owners with other details see *Corn. Corr.* iii. 321-324. They included Newtown Limavady, which was jointly owned by Castlereagh and his father. The respective amounts of compensation for boroughs and also places abolished by the Union were assessed by a Board of three members of Parliament : Hon. Richard Annesley, Sackville Hamilton, and Dr. Duigenan.

the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour for engaging in such dirty work, and am supported only by the reflection that without an Union the British Empire must be dissolved.¹ If Castlereagh was troubled with similar conscientious scruples he did not show them, nor did his pride suffer like that of the Lord-Lieutenant. The Herculean labour of cleaning the Augean stables of the Irish political system might indeed be criticised on certain private grounds, but it could also be justified in the public interest. If half-measures were adopted, he felt that there must be a considerable danger of losing adherents to the cause and very little chance of making converts.² The Chief Secretary had a public duty to perform, and he faced it unflinchingly. That duty was, in his own words, 'to buy out and secure to the Crown for ever the fee simple of Irish corruption, which has so long enfeebled the powers of Government and endangered the connection.'³

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, May 20, June 8 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 101, 102.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, May 21 : H.O. Ireland, 86.

³ Castlereagh to Cooke, June 21, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 333.

CHAPTER IX

THE UNION : SUCCESS

I

OUTSIDE Parliament it was becoming increasingly evident that the Union was gaining public support. Although in the spring the Chief Secretary reported it to be 'making its way in proportion as it is canvassed and understood,' still he could not say with precision when it might be carried in the House ; in fact he considered its success in the next session as 'extremely problematical.' Nevertheless, if he warned the English ministers against any 'impression that might lead to disappointment,' he was not blind to current signs of encouragement ; and as the spring advanced into summer the outlook appreciably brightened. The discussion and decision on the Regency Bill greatly strengthened the Government case in the country. It was quickly seen that by bringing forward this measure the anti-Unionists admitted the danger of the present Anglo-Irish political connection, and that their consent to its relinquishment as impracticable implied a confession of inability to remove the danger 'without altering and surrendering up their final and immutable settlement of 1782.'¹

If the lower orders except in Dublin were generally apathetic, there was a marked change of opinion amongst the country gentry and the manufacturing and trading classes. The rapid improvement which had taken place since the beginning of the year in trade and industry and the consequent increase in revenue begat hopes of an even greater prosperity under the new *régime*. The decision to permit the county representation to remain unaltered had a great effect, and though in strict justice one member was all the county electors could demand, the concession was made, as Castlereagh put it, for the purpose of 'disarming by far the most powerful opposition we have to contend against.'² The borough

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, April 14, 1799 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 274-275.

² Castlereagh to Portland, Feb. 1 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 152.

owners, now that they were to be compensated for the loss of their property, with one or two exceptions came over to the Government side. Downshire still held out, and the county whose governor he was went with him. Castlereagh applied every possible inducement to win him over, but his efforts were not successful. 'Were Lord Downshire to come forward,' reported Cornwallis, 'we should have the whole county of Down unanimous, and the authority of so leading a county could not fail to have a preponderating effect throughout the province.'¹ Another factor in promoting the cause was the goodwill of the Churches. Both the Established and the Roman Catholic denominations approved of Castlereagh's exertions and threw their own influence into the scale.

Throughout the summer the Lord-Lieutenant toured the greater part of the country obtaining declarations in favour of the measure.² For a little time, however, it appeared as if this progress would be cut short when it became known that a French fleet had sailed out of Brest; but the undercurrent of unrest noticeable among the masses on the receipt of this news passed away when the destination of the fleet was discovered to be the Mediterranean. 'It is too provoking,' exclaimed Clare characteristically, 'that the old bitch Lord Keith should have let the French and Spanish fleets slip past him as they have done. Most probably he will be advanced to the English peerage for the exploit.'³

Perhaps the most implacable opponent of the measure in the country was Downshire; but in spite of his political hostility he still corresponded with the Chief Secretary on affairs of local interest, and each was open to receive the other's hospitality. In one of his letters he mentioned his intention of reviving a local race meeting which had lapsed during the Rebellion. 'The only danger,' he observed, 'is that a drop of whiskey may revive the ideas of Yeoman and Orangeman and Union Irishman and Papist after the racing is over.' However, he decided to risk it, and accordingly invited Castlereagh and his family to attend as his

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, May 24 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 319.

² T. D. Ingram, *History of the Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland*, 113-121.

³ Clare to Cooke, Aug. 13 : Dublin Castle MSS.

guests. 'I hope Lady Castlereagh is well,' he wrote; 'if she honours the Maze Races with her presence I hope my house is so far finished as to offer her and your lordship a well-aired bed at Hillsborough.'¹ Castlereagh accepted this invitation on behalf of his wife and himself, as also did his father and step-mother; and they all stayed at Hillsborough for the racing in July. They found their host dispirited and irritable. Creditors were pressing him hard, he was in wretched health, and his wife had just had two successive miscarriages. But the strain of entertaining a house party added to his other worries proved too much for Downshire on this occasion. It is recorded by Bishop Percy that he so far forgot his duty towards his guests that 'he did in the stand say the most insulting things before them against all that promoted the Union which they quietly pocketed. One thing that he said was shocking, which was that 70 thousand troops which England sent over for our protection during the Rebellion were to ram the Union down the throats of the Irish nation.'²

It may be said in passing that both Castlereagh and Cornwallis sincerely deprecated the employment of any greater number of troops than was strictly necessary for the purpose of national defence and the maintenance of internal order. However, during the year 1799 they realised that an efficient body of regular forces must be stationed in the country to guard against the contingency of a foreign invasion, and it is natural that they should have preferred tried English regiments to the local militia and yeomanry whose discipline so frequently merited correction. For a short time, indeed, some Hessian mercenaries were used, but these had been withdrawn immediately after the Rebellion. It is significant, too, that when the strange idea emanated from the War Office in London of sending over a subsidised body of Russian troops the Lord-Lieutenant and his Chief Secretary vehemently rejected it, pointing out that its adoption must speedily lead the public to conclude that 'the Union was to be forced upon this Kingdom by the terror and the bayonets of barbarians.'³

But this suggestion and its accompanying conduct did not constitute the height of Downshire's folly. A few months later he

¹ Downshire to Castlereagh, June 8 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 329, 331.

² Percy to his wife, Dec. 18 : Percy MSS. (B.M. Add. 32, 335); A. C. C. Gausson, *Percy*, 281-2.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, Oct. 19 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 138.

transmitted a petition against the Union to be signed by the officers and men of the militia regiment which he commanded, thereby committing a grave breach of military discipline. Cornwallis, who found him at best 'a proud, ill-tempered, violent fellow,' entertained few regrets in suspending him from the command of the Down Militia;¹ his name was subsequently struck off the Privy Council Roll, and he was deprived of his other offices, including the governorship of the county.² 'His fall was his own act,' declared Portland, 'and it was necessary to make an example.'³ Such an overwhelming disgrace was of course attributed by some of his friends to the malignance of Castlereagh. On the contrary, Castlereagh was exceedingly concerned about the whole affair; and when there was talk in London of having the delinquent tried by court-martial, or at least subjecting his conduct to parliamentary inquiry, he generously exerted himself to prevent either of these proposals from being acted upon.⁴ Instead Downshire was allowed to hide himself in the obscurity of Hillsborough woods, where he rapidly sickened and died of 'gout in the stomach.'⁵

Throughout the summer months Castlereagh worked steadily with the object of gaining a substantial parliamentary majority before the opening of the next session. His brief visit to the north in July enabled him to attend the Down Assizes and to interview the leading persons of property in the county. He appears to have made a vivid impression upon all those with whom he conversed, and to have succeeded in reconciling to his project any landlords who were not directly under Downshire's influence. 'The temper of the north generally is by no means discouraging,' he wrote to Portland on his return to Dublin a fortnight later. 'Your Grace knows that it is not the habit of that part of the Kingdom to take a very lively interest in any measure proposed by Government. Had a Union been suggested by Opposition as

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, June 19, 1799; to Portland, Feb. 4, 7, 1800: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 104, 178; H.O. Ireland, 93. The report of Sir Charles Ross who was sent down to investigate Downshire's conduct will be found in H.O. Ireland, 95.

² Cornwallis to Portland, Feb. 15: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 191. See below, p. 451 note.

³ Portland to Cornwallis, Feb. 17: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 197.

⁴ Castlereagh to Portland, Feb. 15: *Cast. Corr.* iii. 239.

⁵ See below, p. 406.

the only safe means of curing the defects in our representation and of settling any religious differences, I have no doubt the Province of Ulster would have ere this lent its support ; but the people consider success in Parliament so much of course when the Crown is a party that acquiescence on their parts is on such an occasion the most natural mode of showing their approbation. The resistance that has been given to it of late has turned the public attention more to the question and, as far as my information goes, it is gaining friends daily.' ¹

So far so good, but there was still much to be done. The Chief Secretary never relaxed his energies for a moment, interviewing, bargaining, drafting memoranda, writing letters to needy suppliants, and conscientiously attending the Castle in the August heat. He spent his evenings in Phoenix Park answering late despatches and occasionally snatching half an hour for a canter across the 'fifteen acres' with his wife or Lord Cornwallis. Downshire paid his respects at the Castle, and was apparently forgiven on the score of his behaviour at the Maze Races. 'Union is the only thing talked of, thought of or wished about at the Castle,' wrote the Marquess early in September. 'I have had some conversation with Lord Castlereagh which had no effect on either side, but he assured me that the subject was gaining popularity fast in the minds of all descriptions, that it would pass in Parliament by a great majority. I was sorry that terror and corruption could take such hold of men's minds. I stayed with him about two hours, and was tired.' ²

If this description of Castlereagh's methods is false, Downshire was little nearer the truth in estimating the degree of the minister's optimism. Inwardly Castlereagh was by no means sanguine at this stage. 'Upon the whole I am of opinion we shall be able to bring it to a parliamentary question,' he had written to the Home Secretary after his northern expedition, 'and that the Opposition will resolve itself into the natural repugnance which private ambition and private interest may feel to a measure which extinguishes for ever the species of parliamentary authority which has so long prevailed in this country, and in which they are so much interested. Your Grace must be prepared for a severe

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, Aug. 5 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 268.

² Downshire to J. Reilly, Sept. 10 : Downshire MSS.

struggle, and our strength will ultimately be proportioned to the means we can employ to reconcile the personal interests of individuals.' ¹

In order to facilitate his work the English ministers summoned Castlereagh to London for another conference on ways and means, and in view of the multiple points to be discussed the Chief Secretary prepared himself for a more prolonged visit than that which he had been able to pay in the previous autumn. The situation of the Catholics had again a prominent place in the agenda. Some remarks in a letter written on September 14 by the titular Bishop of Cork indicate the sentiments of that body with regard to the great question. 'Lord Castlereagh sailed last night for England,' wrote Dr. Moylan. 'I wish him from my heart a pleasant journey and a safe return. I have many obligations to his Lordship: he has been uncommonly civil and attentive to me. He is a most amiable nobleman and well qualified to fill, with credit to himself and advantage to the nation, the high office he is stationed in. I hope he will have the satisfaction of seeing the great measure of Union completed to the general content of both Kingdoms under his administration.' ²

2

The English Parliament was on the point of meeting when Castlereagh and his wife reached London. All the ministers were consequently in town, and the Chief Secretary had long conversations with them. He had been particularly instructed by Cornwallis before his departure to furnish an outline of the state of the various parties as they then stood in Ireland, and to obtain a definite assurance from authority on the precise line of policy which should be pursued towards the Catholics, since the Lord-Lieutenant felt that 'he should so conduct himself towards that body as to preclude hereafter any well-founded imputation or even any strong impression on their minds that they had been deceived.' ³ Castlereagh stated that, although he could now

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, Aug. 5 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 369.

² Moylan to Sir J. Hippisley, Sept. 14 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 401.

³ Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 1, 1801 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 8. This letter, on which the ensuing account of negotiations is based, was written at the time when the Union came into operation in order to remind the Prime Minister of what had occurred.

reckon on a majority at College Green, it was 'composed of very doubtful materials'; the Protestants were divided on the question 'with the disadvantage of Dublin and the Orange societies against us,' and the Catholics were as a whole holding back under a doubt whether Union would facilitate or impede their objects. It was clear therefore that the Catholic weight would tip the scale, and if they joined the Opposition the measure could not be carried. He added that for his own part he was particularly anxious of being secure against the charge of duplicity before he personally encouraged the Catholics to come forward and to afford him that assistance which he considered so important to the success of the measure.

In consequence of these representations the Cabinet took the Catholic question into consideration, and Castlereagh was requested to attend the meeting in Downing Street at which their decision was announced. The instructions which he was directed to convey to the Lord-Lieutenant were to the following effect :

'That his Excellency was fully warranted in soliciting every support the Catholics could afford ; that he need not apprehend, as far as the sentiments of the Cabinet were concerned, being involved in the difficulty with that body which he seemed to apprehend ; that it was not thought expedient at that time to give any direct assurance to the Catholics ; but that, should circumstances so far alter as to induce his Excellency to consider such an explanation necessary, he was at liberty to state the grounds on which his opinion was formed for the consideration of the Cabinet.'

There is no doubt that at this time the English ministers were generally in favour of emancipation, for, as Castlereagh subsequently reminded Pitt, there was not a single dissident when the matter was broached at this meeting. In fact it was even discussed 'whether an immediate declaration to the Catholics would not be advisable, and whether an assurance should not be distinctly given them in the event of the Union being accomplished of their objects being submitted with the countenance of Government to the United Parliament on a peace.' But this idea was abandoned principally on the ground that the proposed declaration might alienate the Protestants of both countries in a greater degree than it was calculated to assist the measure through the Catholics. In accordance with this unanimous opinion

Castlereagh assured the Lord-Lieutenant that he 'need not hesitate in calling forth the Catholic support in whatever degree he found it practicable to obtain it.' However, he added that, although the Cabinet as a whole favoured emancipation after Union, 'some doubt was entertained as to the possibility of admitting Catholics into some of the *higher offices*, and that ministers apprehended considerable repugnance to the measure in many quarters, and particularly in the *highest*.'

It has been necessary to outline in some detail Castlereagh's policy under this head in order to appreciate the situation when Catholic hopes were disappointed two years later. As to what occurred in Ireland during the interim, one point is of special importance: *no specific promise of emancipation was ever given to the Catholics*. After he had conferred with the Chief Secretary on his return Cornwallis wrote to Whitehall: 'I have no doubt of the wisdom of not only withholding the grant of any immunities to them, but of avoiding all engagements until the business shall be completed.'¹ The Lord-Lieutenant therefore shrank from 'giving the Catholics any direct assurance of being gratified; and throughout the contest earnestly avoided being driven to such an expedient, as he considered a gratuitous concession after the measure as infinitely more consistent with the character of Government.' No more, in fact, was done than to intimate to the Catholics that they should expect emancipation from the hands of a United Parliament, and it was on the strength of this intimation that their support was obtained and the risk of their alliance with the Opposition finally prevented.²

Castlereagh was absent from Ireland for almost three months, the greater part of which time was taken up in negotiations with the English ministers. His proposed articles of Union were discussed one by one, emendations were submitted and doubtful points settled in the general scheme.³ The most significant change from the scheme which had been formulated in the preceding year was the abandoning of procedure by commission. This had been rendered inevitable by the refusal of the Irish Parliament to

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, Dec. 9: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 149.

² Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 1, 1801: *Cast. Corr.* iv. 8-12.

³ For the text of the final draft with corrections see *Dropmore Papers*, vi. 82.

give the original scheme a hearing, so that, as Castlereagh expressed it later in a speech at College Green, 'it became expedient for his Majesty's Government to adopt measures which might defeat the misrepresentation of their views, and unfold to this Kingdom the liberal intentions of Great Britain.'¹ Many years later George IV when on a visit to the country met Bushe, who had been one of the foremost anti-Unionists. The conversation turned on the tactics of the Opposition at this time. 'I think you all committed a great mistake,' said the King. 'Instead of directing opposition you should have made terms as the Scotch did, and you would have got good terms.'² But even if commissioners had been appointed as astute as those who conducted the Union on behalf of Scotland, it is very doubtful whether better terms would have been granted than those which Castlereagh obtained in the autumn of 1799—at least as regards representation.

Perhaps Castlereagh's most solid achievement in the course of of these negotiations was the recasting of the Irish electoral system. Porritt, a leading authority on the constitutional history of the Irish Parliament, has doubted whether 'any but an Irishman, and an Irishman long familiar with the Irish House of Commons and the condition of borough and county representation, could have carried the new plan of representation to a successful issue.'³ The ignorance shown by the English ministers, including Pitt, of the real political condition of Ireland called for the exercise of the greatest tact and discretion on the part of the Chief Secretary. At first they refused to accept Castlereagh's borough valuation and desired the grouping of boroughs by threes as had taken place in Scotland. Castlereagh pointed out that the latter system worked well in Scotland, because there had been no borough-control and borough-mongering at the time of its inception, but that in Ireland the conflict of individual proprietorial interests would make it impracticable. He insisted upon the complete disfranchisement of eighty-four boroughs with pecuniary compensation to the amount of £15,000 per borough as the lowest figure calculated to conciliate the interests affected. The selection

¹ G. Coote, *History of Union*, 337.

² Chief Justice Bushe to his wife, Aug. 28, 1821: Lady Gregory, *Mr. Gregory's Letter-Box*, 156. J. Whiteside, *Life and Death of the Irish Parliament*, 196.

³ A. and E. Porritt, *Unreformed House of Commons*, ii. 491.

of close (*i.e.* corporate) boroughs for compulsory disfranchisement he justified on the ground that almost all such boroughs had been created in the reign of James I with the avowed object of protecting the Protestant Church Establishment, and that the Union would now constitute a more effectual protection in this respect. 'It may therefore very fairly be argued without furnishing any admission prejudicial to any description of Charter,' he said in a Cabinet memorandum on the subject, 'that the extinction of a certain number of boroughs being indispensable to the arrangement, these boroughs have been selected because with few exceptions they have been the most recently erected upon a ground of policy which would no longer exist, and because in point of fact they admitted of that species of compensation which individuals might reasonably expect when they were called upon to make a sacrifice for the public advantage.'¹ The remaining thirty-one boroughs and cities (except Dublin and Cork) were to return one member each, which, together with the 64 county members, would bring the representation within the prescribed figure at Westminster. He summarised the difference in the representation thus :

<i>Irish Parliament.</i>			<i>United Parliament.</i>		
32 Counties	-	64 members.	32 Counties	-	64 members.
117 Boroughs, Cities and Towns	-	234 „	31 Boroughs, Cities and Towns	-	31 „
			Dublin	-	2 „
			Cork	-	2 „
University	-	2 „	University	-	1 „
		<hr/> 300 „			<hr/> 100 „

In the end Castlereagh had his way, and he succeeded in carrying all the points which he submitted. It was a skilful and ingenious piece of work, for the plan had to be such as would not provide English parliamentary reformers with a handle. As Porritt has said, 'not only had Castlereagh to keep the Irish representation at Westminster down to one hundred, and so to arrange the new representation as to offer liberal inducements to

¹ Memorandum relative to the Representation in Ireland, Sept. 23, 1799 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 65. J. T. Gilbert, *History of Dublin*, iii. 127.

borough owners and controllers of county elections to support the Union in Parliament; he had also to remodel the Irish representation with a view to the exigencies of party politics at Westminster.¹ Though his scheme was to come up for revision as a part of the electoral system of the United Kingdom thirty-three years later, it was to remain in substance the basis of Irish parliamentary representation till the repeal of the Union in 1920.

Castlereagh set out for Dublin towards the end of November. *En route* he wrote to Portland : 'The more I consider the terms of the Union which you are prepared to offer to Ireland, the more confident I feel that the measure must ultimately succeed. I shall have a strong case to state to the Irish Parliament; I wish I could appeal to an audience solely intent upon the *public* question.'² The personal aspect of his mission was not so fortunate, for in the course of this return journey a footpad cut his portmanteau from behind the post-chaise in which he and his wife were travelling. The bag contained two thousand guineas and all his instructions relating to the Union. He was probably more inconvenienced than concerned about the loss of the documents. 'They are quite safe,' observed Bishop Percy on hearing the news, 'for no thief will dare to produce them, and he may apply for new instructions to the English Ministry.'³ When he reached Chester he was informed that an Irish packet was on the point of sailing from Parkgate, and although a strong east wind was blowing he decided to embark on this vessel. When they had got as far as Beaumaris on the Welsh coast the wind suddenly changed to the north-west, so that the captain was obliged to put back to Parkgate. As Castlereagh ruefully remarked, it was most certainly a case of 'the more haste the worse speed,' for they had been twenty-four hours at sea to no purpose. 'Lady Castlereagh is fortunately a good sailor,' he added. 'Her talent was somewhat tried last night.'⁴ Some consolation, however, awaited him at the end of this troublesome journey, for on landing in Dublin a week later he found 'everything going on well—the country as quiet as we can hope and our friends in good spirits.'⁵

¹ Porritt, ii. 491.

² Castlereagh to Portland, Nov. 28 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 147.

³ Percy to his wife, Dec. 18 : Percy MSS. (B.M. Add. 32, 335).

⁴ Castlereagh to King, Nov. 27 : H.O. Ireland, 87.

⁵ Castlereagh to King, Dec. 9 : H.O. Ireland, 87

As soon as he arrived he set about finding a larger house for his private use. Conolly's house in Merrion Street, which was his present private residence in town, was really too small for the amount of entertaining and other business connected with his office which he was expected to conduct. His rooms in the Castle were not sufficiently commodious for these negotiations, and were moreover public, while his official residence in Phoenix Park was inconvenient in the matter of distance for many visitors.

It so happened that the owner of a grand mansion on the opposite side of Merrion Street had recently died, and his heirs, who found its upkeep too expensive for their resources, were looking for a suitable tenant. What building could be better suited to the requirements of the chief Minister of State than Mornington House, with its magnificent wrought-iron lamp-stands, its panelled staircases, its spacious reception rooms and ornamented ceilings? Both inside and out it typified the splendour of Georgian architecture in eighteenth-century Ireland.¹ Within the compass of its walls Arthur Wellesley had been born and Valentine Lawless had grown up to revolutionary youth; there Lord-Lieutenants and their aides-de-camp had drunk deeply if not wisely; and there had been poured out the secrets and troubles and triumphs of every leader in Dublin society from Lord Charlemont to Lady Pamela Fitzgerald. Not the least attractive feature indeed about Mornington House was the dining-room, and few guests could forget the inlaid marble mantelpiece in the Adams' finest style as they drew their chairs and glasses round the cheery fire after dessert.² A lease was accordingly made out to Lord Castlereagh at a rent of £800 a year, and the Chief Secretary immediately took possession. It is unnecessary to dwell on the uses to which the house was put in the popular mind. 'In it,' wrote Lord Cloncurry characteristically, 'was concocted those plots that ended in overturning the liberties and arresting the prosperity of Ireland. There also were celebrated with corrupt confusion suited to the occasion the nightly orgies of the plotters.'³ Jonah Barrington and Charles

¹ Mornington House was then known as No. 6 Merrion Street. Its former owner, Nicholas Lawless, 1st Lord Cloncurry, who had purchased it from Lord Mornington, died in August 1799.

² Cp. *Georgian Society*, i. 13, 40.

³ Cloncurry, *Personal Recollections*, 9.

Lever have effectively embroidered this legend and it has died hard.¹ And yet curiously enough Mornington House constitutes in the Dublin of to-day one of the few remaining links which the country has with England.²

3

During the summer the Government majority in Parliament had been steadily rising ; and when he returned to Ireland early in December Castlereagh reckoned it as high as one hundred and eighty, though he realised too that by no means the whole of this number could be depended upon for their services in the forthcoming campaign.³ ' It is a complicated struggle and we must be prepared in every part of it to encounter difficulties,' he told King, Wickham's successor at Whitehall : ' I trust we shall find the means of overcoming them.' ⁴ One of his most urgent requests, therefore, was for further funds. ' We are in great distress and I wish the transmiss was more considerable than the last,' he wrote at the beginning of the New Year. ' It is very important that we should not be destitute of the means on which so much depends.' ⁵ When the additional consignment was sent the English Under-Secretary does not appear to have exceeded his instructions in informing Castlereagh that ' the fund was good security for a further sum though not immediately, if it could be well laid out and furnished on the spot.' ⁶ Meanwhile the ' anti-Union stock purse ' was filling rapidly, and at the same time as the Chief Secretary was recruiting the '*primum mobile*,' no less than £100,000 was said to have been subscribed to it. ⁷ The minister saw that he must fight the Opposition with its own weapons, and he did not permit himself to be worried by conscientious scruples in the process of combat. ' I pity from my

¹ See in particular Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation* and Lever's novel *The Knight of Gwynne*.

² Mornington House (now 5 Upper Merrion Street) has for many years been used as offices by the Land Purchase Commission. See Georgian Society, i. 13, 40.

³ Castlereagh to Portland, Dec. 17 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 151.

⁴ Castlereagh to King, Jan. 1, 1800 : H.O. Ireland, 93.

⁵ Castlereagh to King, Jan. 2 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 156.

⁶ ' Memorandum in Mr. King's Writing ' : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 156.

⁷ Castlereagh to King, Jan. 27 : H.O. Ireland, 93.

soul Lord Castlereagh,' wrote a friend to Pelham. 'He has a phalanx of mischievous talent and a host of passion, folly, corruption and enthusiasm to contend with.'¹

The minister was lacking in neither courage nor resourcefulness. On the eve of the opening of Parliament he told Cooke that he was in good spirits. 'I think we gain ground every day,' reported the Under-Secretary. 'Parnell thinks we are all humbugging and that the game is meant to be abandoned. I am afraid like all humbuggers he will humbug himself, which I regret.'² About the same time Castlereagh gave a dinner party at his new house off Merrion Square. He invited about twenty of his staunchest followers, described by Barrington as 'tried men' and men of 'fighting families.' After a sumptuous meal, at which the champagne and madeira played their part, Sir John Blaquiere, a diplomatist of the old school who was unrivalled 'in polite conviviality,' skilfully adverted in conversation to the necessity of Government friends prosecuting a vigorous offensive campaign in Parliament, and finally suggested that each man present should mark out a member of the Opposition for his particular attention. The host thereupon observed that at all events some method ought to be adopted of ensuring that there would always be a sufficient number of supporters in the House to carry any question, since motions of the utmost importance had often been irretrievably lost by reason of ill-attendance. It was then proposed to have a similar dinner every night in one of the committee rooms at College Green, where from twenty to thirty members 'could be always at hand to make up a House or for any *emergency* which should call for an unexpected reinforcement during any part of the discussion.'

Under-Secretary Cooke, who was present, is now supposed to have let drop a few hints as to official rewards, so that, in Barrington's words, 'every man became in a prosperous state of official pregnancy.' Every man also singled out his parliamentary opponent. The Chief Secretary was to look to Ponsonby, St. George Daly to Plunket, Toler to Bushe, and Isaac Corry to Grattan, who was reported to have just paid £2,400 for a seat.³ The dining

¹ Alexander to Pelham, Jan. 15 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 161.

² Cooke to Beresford, Jan. 14 : *Beres. Corr.* ii. 236.

³ Castlereagh to King, Jan. 1 : H.O. Ireland, 93.

proposal was also unanimously agreed to, and Sir John Blaquiere pleasantly remarked that at any rate 'they would be sure of a good *cook* at their dinners.' It was long after midnight when this congenial company separated, 'fully resolved,' as Barrington humorously put it, 'to eat, drink, speak and *fight* for Lord Castlereagh.' Thus was founded the so-called Pistolling Club, which came to be known as such when shortly afterwards one of the rhetorical duels in Parliament to which its members were supposedly pledged not unsurprisingly led to a more real meeting at Balls Bridge.¹

On January 15, 1800, commenced the last session of the Irish Parliament at College Green. The Speech from the Throne contained no allusion to the great question before the country. The ostensible reason for this omission, as Castlereagh explained to the House of Commons, was that the King's ministers intended to make the Union a subject for separate and distinct communication to Parliament. The real reason, however, was that owing to the operation of the Place Act a considerable number of seats had fallen vacant during the recess (in fact, within the first four days of the session no less than thirty-nine writs were moved), and as the majority of these were to be filled with Government supporters the Chief Secretary did not wish the measure to be discussed till this process of reconstituting the membership of the legislature had been completed. But the Opposition was equally determined to press forward a discussion, hoping thereby to catch the minister unprepared. As soon as the King's Speech had been read in the Commons, Sir Lawrence Parsons therefore moved an amendment pledging the House to maintain a free and independent Parliament resident within the Kingdom.²

Parsons fulminated in his usual style for over an hour, accusing the Chief Secretary of 'prostituting the prerogative of appointing to places in order to pack a Parliament' and of attempting to force an unpopular measure through the legislative body whilst martial law prevailed and there was a considerable armed force in the country.³ In his eagerness to reply Castlereagh appears to

¹ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 264-266. See below, p. 352, and Grattan, *Life of Grattan*, v. 73-74.

² *H. of C. Journals*, xix. 14.

³ *Belfast News-Letter*, Jan. 21, 24. *Report of a Debate in the Irish House of Commons on the 15th and 16th of January, 1800* (Dublin, 1800).

have risen immediately this speech was finished, for it is reported that the Speaker raised a laugh by asking him 'if he wished to second the amendment of the Honourable Baronet.'¹ The minister thereupon resumed his seat for a few minutes during which he was obliged to witness the performance of this object by Francis Savage, his colleague in the representation of County Down. 'The decided sentiment of the great and populous county of Down which I have the honour to represent,' exclaimed Savage, 'is against the baneful measure of a Union. This I declare to the face of the noble Lord on the Treasury Bench as the opinion of his constituents, trusting that it may have the influence on his measures which it is entitled to.'

Castlereagh, though he was not prepared to re-argue the question on its merits, nevertheless answered Parsons with much ingenuity. 'How was it,' he asked, 'that gentlemen who had in the most decided manner opposed all discussion whatever of the question had at a later date expressed a wish to discuss it when the Crown under the present circumstances had withdrawn it?' Now again they would not listen to it. 'Was it consistent,' he went on, 'that when the public voice had not been spoken upon this subject gentlemen were willing to argue the question, but now when so large a part of the Kingdom had expressed its approbation of the measure they did not think it even fit for discussion?' He added that 'nineteen of the most considerable counties in Ireland constituting over five-sevenths of the Kingdom had come forward and not only expressed their wish that a discussion should take place but had in the most explicit manner declared themselves in favour of the legislative Union between the two countries.' Last year the measure had been withdrawn because it was not fully understood at that time, 'and it was stated that it would not again be proposed without full and fair notice, and until there was reason to believe that the Parliament and the country had changed their opinions upon the subject.' That change had, he believed, taken place; and he was fully satisfied that the measure 'was now approved by a great majority of the people.' Having explained that it had not been mentioned in the King's Speech because it was intended to make it the subject of a special communication to Parliament, he concluded by moving that the

¹ Alexander to Pelham, Jan. 15: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 162.

House be called for this purpose on February 3 'in order that there might be the fullest possible attendance upon so very important a subject.' On that day he proposed to introduce the resolutions for a Union.

The debate lasted throughout the night and was conducted on each side with an astonishing vigour and even ferocity. Ponsonby, Plunket and Bushe attacked the Chief Secretary with their accustomed virulence and personal invective. As the candles were spluttering out and the first rays of the wintry morning sun pierced the windows of the chamber, an extraordinary scene was enacted before the eyes of the minister and the other members. Egan was in the midst of a dissertation upon the glorious constitution of '82 and was eulogising its author, when suddenly the doors opposite the Speaker's chair were thrown open, and there between William Ponsonby and Arthur Moore stood the old patriot himself. His familiar but emaciated figure was dressed in the old blue and gold Volunteer uniform, and leaning heavily upon the shoulders of his two friends he advanced slowly and apparently in considerable pain up the floor of the House. Henry Grattan had returned to the scene of his former triumphs. The writ for his constituency (Wicklow Borough) had been moved the previous evening and the election hurried through after midnight. The return, duly signed by the sheriff, had then been rushed on horseback to town, and its bearer had reached Grattan's house at five o'clock that morning. Though ill and in bed, after some persuasion he consented to be dressed and carried down to College Green in a sedan-chair.

Whether his reappearance in the assembly was designed to be theatrical or not, the impression it caused was unforgettable. There is a tradition that Castlereagh immediately rose to his feet and out of respect remained standing with his head uncovered till he had reached the table and taken the oaths (which by the rules of the Irish Parliament could be administered at any time). Grattan then sat down beside Plunket on the front Opposition bench and listened to the remainder of Egan's speech which his dramatic entrance had interrupted.¹ Egan obligingly cut short his remarks, and a few moments later Grattan was seen to struggle to his feet with evident difficulty. He was, in fact, so

¹ D. Plunket, *Life of Plunket*, i. 194.

weak that he had to beg the permission of the House to address it sitting. But in spite of this physical handicap he succeeded in recapturing the applause not only of the audience but of the nation at large with a speech which deservedly ranks among the foremost examples of British oratory. For over two hours and with astonishing fluency for a sick man he examined the proposed union from every aspect. At length utterly exhausted he fell back in his place and pronounced a peroration which brought the older members of the House back to a pregnant summer's day eighteen years before. 'The thing which he proposes to buy is what cannot be sold—liberty,' he said, pointing an accusing finger at the Chief Secretary. 'He proposes to you to substitute the British Parliament in your place, and to destroy the body that restored your liberties and restore that body which destroyed them. Against such a proposition, were I expiring on the floor, I should beg to utter my last breath and record my dying testimony.'

Castlereagh's work during the recess had been thorough, and such eloquence as this no longer possessed the power of turning votes against the Government. The minister was now noticed whispering to Isaac Corry, and immediately the Chancellor of the Exchequer rose and discharged his obligations to the Chairman of the Pistolling Club by denouncing Grattan's unpatriotic conduct in no unmeasured terms. It was close on ten o'clock in the morning when Corry finished and the question was put. In the division there voted for the Government one hundred and thirty-eight and against it ninety-six.¹ Considering the number of vacancies in the House this could not be called an unsatisfactory result. 'The debate was very animated,' Castlereagh wrote to Pitt by the first post, 'and our speakers exerted themselves with very great effect against the disaffected branch of the Opposition. . . . I think the measure is commenced under as favourable auspices as we had reason to expect.'² In the same mail the Lord-Lieutenant wrote to Portland: 'I trust this first success will cement our party; it is still composed of loose materials, much more intent upon the personal than the public question.'³ In his

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xix. 14.

² Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 16: Pitt MSS. 327.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, Jan. 16: *Corn. Corr.* iii.

letter to the Prime Minister Castlereagh added : ' We must be prepared for much embarrassment from our own friends in the prosecution of the measure.'

The presence of Grattan in the House and his eloquent appeal immediately aroused a sense of popular enthusiasm throughout the city. Prominent Unionists were insulted as they passed through the streets on their way home after the sitting. Castlereagh's carriage was surrounded by a howling riff-raff which threatened to tear its occupant in pieces, but on the minister leaning out of the window and presenting a pistol at the heads of his nearest assailants, the crowd at a loss fell back and the carriage was allowed to proceed unmolested.¹ The mob contented itself with burning the object of its hatred in effigy outside his new residence in Merrion Street, and sang a little rhyme which the editors of *The Anti-Union* had made up about him :

' Rash Castlereagh, audacious lad,
The Phaeton of modern days,
In hot career as wild and mad,
Has set old Ireland in a blaze.'²

Riots broke out in several parts of the town, and the Lord-Lieutenant wrote anxiously to Whitehall for military reinforcements.³ There was disquieting talk of the yeomanry and Orange Societies taking up arms in defence of their so-called national liberties, and the Opposition leaders went down to their respective counties ' to rouse the people as far as they can against what appears to be the sense of Parliament.' ' Much ill-humour exists in Dublin,' wrote Castlereagh a few days after the debate on the address, ' and it is not improbable that some popular demonstration will be attempted if they feel themselves at all supported in the country.'⁴ The Opposition boasted that £100,000 had been subscribed by its members ' for the purpose of buying seats to resist the Union,' and a circular note signed by Downshire, Charlemont and W. B. Ponsonby was sent round all the coun-

¹ McTier to Drennan, Feb. 11 : Drennan Letters, 833 (unpublished). Cp. Reede, 15.

² *The Anti-Union*, Feb. 12, 1799 (No. 22). Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 267.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, Jan. 18, 1800 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 165.

⁴ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 27 : H.O. Ireland, 93.

ties entreating the freeholders to sign petitions against the measure.¹

This propaganda was not without effect. Londonderry, for instance, informed his son that the prevalent idea amongst most of the tenants in County Down was that when the Parliament should be abolished 'Irish law' would be at an end and all their leases broken—'they are told to induce them to sign against the measure that the reason so many gentlemen are for an Union is that they may new-let their estates at advanced rents.'² But the Chief Secretary was not much disturbed, and he prepared to meet the storm with his usual composure, rallying the Government forces and outlining their tactics to Portland. 'The Speaker has been treated with the utmost respect and his immediate party with that consideration which is due to their loyalty,' he wrote on January 27. 'Towards the other branch of Opposition we have had less forbearance, and I flatter myself that in carrying the war into their quarters we have not only kept the Opposition in a state of less perfect connection but relieved ourselves from the inconvenience of their aggression. It has also given our friends more confidence in being well supported by each other when necessary; and this being accomplished, which was much wanted in the course of the last session, it is now our object to aim at a cool investigation of the question and to remain on the defensive.'³

4

Castlereagh had hoped to be able to introduce his Union resolutions in the House of Commons and explain the measure in detail on February 3, but 'a severe attack of the prevalent influenza' drove him 'at a moment when I can ill afford it' to nurse himself in Phoenix Park, and consequently prevented the performance of this duty till two days later.⁴ The House accordingly adjourned to the 5th 'without a word being said,' and in the interval the Chief Secretary was able to digest more

¹ Castlereagh to King, Jan. 25: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 170. To Portland, Jan. 29: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 174.

² Castlereagh to King, Jan. 31: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 176.

³ Castlereagh to Portland, Jan. 27: H.O. Ireland, 93.

⁴ Castlereagh to King, Jan. 31, Feb. 2: H.O. Ireland, 93.

fully his final instructions, which had only arrived a day or two previously.¹

His speech, which was elaborate and carefully prepared, was in fact the longest which he delivered in the Irish Parliament, and is one of the very few that were subsequently published.² The House was packed to overflowing when the Speaker took the chair shortly before four o'clock in the afternoon. After prayers had been read and formal business transacted, the Chief Secretary rose from his accustomed place on the Treasury Bench. In one hand he held a message from the Lord-Lieutenant which contained the King's recommendation of a legislative Union, and in the other he held the resolutions embodying the measure. He first moved that the message be taken into consideration. He then proceeded to unfold the general scheme, reading and explaining the resolutions one by one and finally laying them on the table.

Although the main features of the Union were already known by reason of the minister's conversations with the more prominent individuals in the country, nevertheless his words were attended with the utmost sense of expectation and interest on the part of his audience. On this occasion he appeared unusually pale, and he was obviously not quite himself. His opening sentences contained an allusion to his recent indisposition, and the weakness of his voice suggested that he might not be able to conclude the speech to his satisfaction. But as he warmed to his subject his physical powers correspondingly rallied, and for the next two hours he was engaged in explaining and justifying his plan. It is unnecessary to follow him into all his arguments. That in which he dwelt upon the political benefit which the country would receive by reason of the change as contrasted with her present situation deserves repetition.

'It is said, Sir, that an Union will reduce Ireland to the abject nature of a colony. Is it, Sir, by making her a constituent part of the greatest and first empire in the world? For my part, Sir, if I were to describe a colony, I would picture a country in a situation somewhat similar to that of Ireland at present. I would describe a country whose Crown was dependent on that of another country, enjoying a local Legislature but without any power entrusted to that Legislature of

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, Feb. 3 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 177.

² *Speech of the Rt. Hon. Lord Viscount Castlereagh on an Incorporating Union with Great Britain, February 5, 1800* (Dublin, 1800).

regulating the succession to that Crown. I would describe it as having an executive power administered by the orders of a non-resident Minister irresponsible to the colony for his acts or his advice ; I would describe it as incapable of passing the most insignificant law without the licence of a Minister of another country ; I would describe it as a country unknown to foreign nations in the quality of an independent state and as subject to another power with regard to all the questions which concern alliances, the declaration and conduct of war, or the negotiations for peace.'

Having stated the principle of the Union of the two Kingdoms, the two Crowns and the two Church Establishments, Castlereagh went on to deal at some length with the financial, commercial and parliamentary aspects of the measure. The two national debts and systems of taxation were to be kept wholly separate for the present, but a fixed proportion would be established in which each country should contribute to the general expenses of the Empire. This proportion he proposed to fix as the result of somewhat complicated calculations at fifteen to two—in other words, Ireland should contribute two-seventeenths of the revenue to the Imperial Exchequer. After twenty years the United Parliament could revise this proportion if considered necessary. The commercial clauses were largely based on Pitt's propositions which Thomas Orde had successfully introduced as Chief Secretary in 1785, but which had failed to win the approval of the legislature at Westminster. With a few specified exceptions the principle of free trade was applied. The Irish linen bounties, for example, were to be retained, and there were to be some countervailing import duties on certain articles manufactured in each country. The proposed method of parliamentary representation has already been indicated.¹ In the House of Lords Ireland was to be represented by four spiritual peers sitting in rotation and twenty-eight temporal peers elected for life. In the House of Commons there were to be one hundred Irish members, consisting of sixty-four from the counties and thirty-six from the boroughs, cities, and University of Dublin. The patrons of the eighty-four totally disfranchised boroughs were to receive compensation to the amount of £15,000 for each borough. ('If this be a measure of purchase it will be a purchase of peace, and the expense of it will be redeemed by one year's saving of the Union.') In the case of

¹ See above, pp. 335-336.

partially disfranchised boroughs, representation in the Imperial Parliament was considered sufficient compensation. 'One State, one Legislature, one Church,' he said : 'these are the leading features of the system, and without identity with Great Britain in these three great points of connection we can never hope for any real and permanent security.'

By the time he had reached his peroration Castlereagh was fairly exhausted, but taxing his bodily resources to the utmost he summoned up sufficient energy to close with a glowing tribute to his political master. To him alone he willingly and unselfishly gave the honour and glory of the measure.

'Rash indeed would be the man who should assert that the dangers in which we have been involved are entirely past. We have, however, made some progress towards security ; and it is worth while for gentlemen to consider that it is to that great character we owe the present proposal, by whose penetrating sagacity and invincible constancy of mind under the most strenuous dangers not only this island owes the security in which it stands but all Europe is indebted for its preservation from anarchy and desolation. If such a period of danger were to recur, it is more than possible that Great Britain may not have such a character to rise up again for her salvation. It becomes us, therefore, to seize the present moment and to strengthen the Irish Constitution by blending and uniting for ever with the great and powerful Empire of Great Britain.

If this great work shall be effected and if at any future day the enemies of Great Britain and mankind shall again be let loose upon the social world, I doubt not that Ireland will be in such a situation of unanimity and power as to bear a conspicuous part with Great Britain in the glorious task of again restoring the liberties of Europe.'

The ensuing discussion was marked by the usual acrimonious observations and personal references on the part of the Opposition which had been a feature of every debate regarding the Union in the House of Commons.¹ Ponsonby again administered a verbal castigation to the Chief Secretary, and the eccentric Francis Dobbs informed the minister with a dramatic flourish that 'the independence of Ireland is written in the immutable records of Heaven.' Richard Lovel Edgeworth (little Maria's father) made another extraordinary speech in which he declared that, although

¹ *Report of the Debate in the Irish House of Commons on the 5th and 6th of February, 1800, on delivering a Message from His Majesty on an Union* (Dublin, 1800).

'my own opinion is in favour of a Union,' he would vote against it. But in spite of the unbounded vehemence of the anti-Unionists and a number of unexpected secessions, the issue was never really in doubt. The question was finally put at one o'clock in the following afternoon, and on a division the Speaker announced :

Ayes	-	-	-	-	158
Noes	-	-	-	-	115
Majority in favour of Government					43

This was the largest division ever known in the Irish House of Commons, there being present including the Speaker and tellers two hundred and seventy-eight members.¹ The twenty-two absentees included vacant seats and pairs.

The Chief Secretary's performance raised him higher in the public estimation if it did not endear him to the hearts of his political opponents. 'He was not quite so well as I could have wished him,' observed Cooke, who had listened to his long speech, 'but notwithstanding his weakness he made a real impression. Our friends are completely satisfied with his outline.'² There were, of course, some grouzers in the Government camp. 'I think with you,' wrote Lord Carysfort to Grenville some days later, 'that Castlereagh's speech was not a good one. He talked a great deal of nonsense about Parliamentary Reform and has furnished a weapon against himself by setting in an odious light the compensation for the boroughs, and if an idea should get abroad that Government will not be able to realise the hopes they have held out on that it will occasion many to change sides.'³ But Castlereagh well knew the temper of his audience, and he rightly felt that he had convinced them that where an injury is done to individual interests for the public good, in point of justice and still more strongly in point of policy it required compensation. (Even Lord Carysfort unblushingly accepted £15,000 for his borough.)⁴

In judging Carysfort's remarks it should also be remembered

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xix. 31 ; *Corn. Corr.* iii. 181.

² Cooke to King, Feb. 6 : *H.O. Ireland*, 95.

³ Carysfort to Grenville, Feb. 21 : *Buckingham*, iii. 78.

⁴ *Cp. Memorandum Relative to the Representation of Ireland*, Sept. 23, 1799 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 67.

that at the time they were uttered the Government situation was not entirely uncritical. Seven members who voted with the Opposition on February 6 had changed sides, thus making a relative difference of fourteen in the division lists ; one of these was the notorious ' Buck ' Whaley, whom Castlereagh discovered had been bought over by the enemy for £4,000. Then five members who had not voted at all on January 16 unexpectedly went into the Opposition lobby on February 6, and in the meantime the Opposition had been reinforced by a number of able debaters, including Saurin, Burrowes and Goold. This explains why, although Government had filled a number of seats since the opening of the session, its majority had only increased by one. Further defections were expected in view of the fact that the Opposition was now offering as much as £5,000 for a single vote, ' and I lament,' said Castlereagh in a letter announcing the result of the division to Portland, ' that there are individuals remaining amongst us that are likely to yield to this temptation.' ' A not less formidable principle we have to contend against,' he wrote in the same letter to Whitehall, ' is the effect produced by their system of intimidation on the minds of our timid and lukewarm friends. The Opposition have shown their determination to rouse the disaffection of the country and to hunt the people at the Government and have not confined their efforts to the people alone ; both Yeomanry and Militia are held forth to shake the constancy of our friends. Your Grace is fully apprized of the case of the Downshire Regiment.' He was determined to meet the Opposition boldly, though he was painfully aware of the remaining difficulties to be overcome. ' I trust the firmness the Lord-Lieutenant has shown,' he added, ' will dissolve this dangerous combination and keep a party sufficiently strong together to accomplish the great object in view. Nothing but energy can prevent the Government from being trampled upon.' ¹

A fortnight later the preliminary resolution ' that a legislative Union of the two Kingdoms was desirable ' was carried in the House of Commons by a majority of forty-six after a debate lasting twenty hours.² Isaac Corry chose this occasion to deliver a severe personal attack upon Grattan. The latter's retort was so

¹ Castlereagh to Portland, Feb. 7 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 182.

² *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 21.

appropriate that the Chancellor of the Exchequer immediately sent him a challenge. A meeting took place some hours later at Balls Bridge in the presence of an immense crowd, including the Sheriff, who made no attempt to interfere, and as a result Corry was wounded in the arm.¹ Meanwhile the Speaker delivered a long speech 'of much ingenuity, violence and address' in Committee, endeavouring 'to prove the whole system as destitute of advantage to Ireland in finance and ruinous to her in commerce,' and Castlereagh replied impromptu 'with much ability and effect.'² The mob returned from the sport at Balls Bridge to College Green and assaulted prominent Unionists, repeatedly attempting to throw their carriages into the river as they were returning from the House. Two members of the Beresford family were beaten, and Mr. Trench, whose fickle conduct during a former debate made him a particular object of popular antipathy, 'got a violent stroke of a stone in a tender place,' and 'was much hurt for the time.'³ In consequence the majority of the members went about armed, and detachments of cavalry were ordered out by Castlereagh to patrol the streets and check acts of violence. This precaution gave rise to the rumour assiduously fanned by the Opposition that the Government intended to overawe the House and the nation and carry through the Union by force. But the minister knew only too well what must be the inevitable result of withdrawing the troops at such a period. 'I trust your Grace will preserve to us a strong British force during the remainder of the struggle,' he wrote to Portland. 'It is the only thing that will effectually discourage any attempt at resistance and in doing so prevent the effusion of much blood.'⁴

The next few weeks drained Castlereagh's reserve of nervous energy; within a month he had succeeded in piloting safely every clause of the measure through its committee stages. During this period the Government forces remained *in statu quo*. 'I see no

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Feb. 18: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 196. Grattan, v. 107 *et seq.*

² Cornwallis to Portland, Feb. 18: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 195. *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 25. Viscount Castlereagh: *A Reply to the Speech of the Speaker as stated to have been delivered on the 17th of February, 1800* (Dublin, 1800).

³ Beresford to Auckland, Feb. 6: Auck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 455).

⁴ Castlereagh to Portland, March 16: H.O. Ireland, 95.

prospect of converts,' he wrote at the end of February. 'The Opposition are steady to each other. I hope we shall be able to make our friends true. A few rats might have a very injurious effect.' As for the threatened obstructionist tactics, 'we shall sit every day and tire them out if they attempt to make a vexatious delay.'¹ When it is remembered that the Opposition consisted of at least one hundred and twenty members well combined, many of whom were of the greatest weight and talent in the House, and had more than half the county members on their side as well as the entire city populace of Dublin, it is surprising that the minister accomplished his work with such little unpleasant friction. His own followers responded nobly to his exhortations. The sittings never broke up earlier than midnight, and frequently lasted till past noon on the following day. 'We have given ourselves no rest or relaxation whatever,' he wrote to Whitehall. 'Our friends have submitted to the severest attendance ever known in the history of Parliament with unexampled patience.'² The longest discussions were on the commercial clauses. Castlereagh was particularly anxious to conciliate the manufacturing interests likely to be affected by the measure, and he patiently listened to the evidence of their representatives at the Bar of the House, and consented to a number of material amendments. The cotton industry, for example, received an annual subsidy for five years, and the reduction of the protective duty on Irish calicoes was postponed till 1807.³

At the same time it was found necessary to re-enact a measure of Martial Law. On the night the measure was committed a strange incident occurred. A drunken barrister called Sinclair, who was known to entertain very violent opinions on the subject of the Union, came down to the House determined to make a speech against it, though he was not a member. The Chairman of Committees (Under-Secretary Cooke) had just taken the chair when he shouted from the gallery: 'Now the greatest assassin

¹ Castlereagh to King, Feb. 27: H.O. Ireland, 93; *Corn. Corr.* iii. 200. The version of this letter given in the *Cornwallis Correspondence* is emasculated and inaccurate: the last sentence is omitted entirely, and the word 'votes' is substituted for 'rats.'

² Castlereagh to King, March 7: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 206.

³ Castlereagh to Ross, March 7; Cooke to Castlereagh, April 5: *Cast. Corr.* iii. 251, 260. Cooke to Auckland, March 22; Castlereagh to Auckland, April 6: Auck. MSS. (B.M. Add. 34, 455).

will take the chair—let the bloodiest assassin take the chair.’ The other occupants of the gallery were unable to restrain their emotion on hearing this outburst, and several hats fell down on to the floor of the House which were mistaken by the more nervous members for bombs. The door-keepers wisely locked the doors of the gallery and left the spectators to secure the delinquent, who was later brought before the Speaker by the Sergeant-at-Arms and committed to Newgate.¹

5

After the middle of March the Opposition ceased to divide in the Commons. By the end of the same month the resolutions of Union had passed both Houses ; and as soon as they had been despatched to England, Parliament adjourned for some weeks in order to give them time to pass through Westminster.² The Lord-Lieutenant at first wished to send Castlereagh to London to advise the English ministers when the resolutions were before the British Parliament. Eventually Cooke was sent over instead, since both Portland and Cornwallis on reflection concluded that there was too much at stake to permit of the Chief Secretary’s leaving Ireland at that moment.³ Pitt had indeed expressed a particular desire to see him, so by way of compromise Castlereagh suggested that he should go over after the prorogation.⁴ He was, however, allowed to go to the north for a fortnight with Elliot, so that he might attend the spring assizes at Downpatrick and see his father at Mount Stewart. Downshire had temporarily emerged from solitude and was busy getting up a county petition to the King against the Union, so that his visit was not ill-timed.⁵ The Grand Jury, which though led by Castlereagh was generally admitted to have been impartially chosen, voted a counter-petition by a majority of fifteen to eight, and Downshire retired

¹ Cornwallis to Portland, March 12 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 210. *Belfast News-Letter*, March 18. Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 285.

² *H. of C. Journals*, xix. 125.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, March 29 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 223.

⁴ Castlereagh to Cooke, June 25 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 338.

⁵ Castlereagh to Portland, April 21 : H.O. Ireland, 96. Cornwallis to Ross, April 18 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 228.

to England with the discomfoting knowledge that he had shot his bolt.¹

The Chief Secretary accordingly returned to Dublin in good spirits, and reported that, with the exception of Louth and Fermanagh, the northern counties were now in favour of the measure.² He found the capital unusually quiet on his arrival, and concluded that affairs had generally taken a turn for the better. Cornwallis was already more than satisfied with his Secretary's management of the measure. 'Lord Castlereagh has improved so much as a speaker as to become nearly master of the House of Commons,' he observed on the reassembling of Parliament in May, 'and the gratification of national pride, which the Irish feel at the prospect of his making a figure in the great political world, have much diminished the unpopularity which his cold and distant manners in private society had produced.'³ Authoritative testimony on the other side of the Channel was no less flattering. 'I promise you,' wrote Camden to his nephew just before the Easter adjournment, 'that Mr. Pitt has spoken of you in the way you could wish, and the private letters from Ireland contain perfect satisfaction in your parliamentary exertions. You have therefore the greatest reason to be satisfied with yourself—the best person to be satisfied with.'⁴

Meanwhile the Union resolutions had speedily passed through all their stages at Westminster and had been sent back to Dublin. They were now drafted into the form of a bill which Castlereagh on May 21 obtained leave of the House of Commons to introduce.⁵ In spite of the prevailing lassitude in the House, Castlereagh's anticipation that 'the discussion which leads to absolute extinction must be critical in a Parliament constituted as ours is' proved correct.⁶ An attempt to prevent the first reading by shouting the minister down as he presented the bill was unsuccessful. When it came up for second reading some days later the Op-

¹ Castlereagh to Littlehales, April 23 : H.O. Ireland, 96. Cornwallis to Ross, April 23 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 229.

² Castlereagh to King, May 1 : H.O. Ireland, 96.

³ Cornwallis to Ross, May 18 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 235.

⁴ Camden to Castlereagh, March 23 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 258.

⁵ Leave was granted by 160 votes to 100 : *Belfast News-Letter*, May 27. Cornwallis to Portland, May 22 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 239.

⁶ Castlereagh to Portland, March 29 : H.O. Ireland, 95.

position resorted to bolder tactics.¹ Grattan moved its rejection in a speech which was probably the most inflammatory that he ever delivered at College Green. In declining to accept the Union as permanent, though he realised its immediate operation, he sounded a dangerous note which was to reverberate with increasing volume through the new century.

‘The Constitution may be *for a time* so lost—the character of the country cannot be so lost. The ministers of the Crown may at length find that it is not so easy to put down for ever an ancient and a respectable nation by abilities however great, by power and corruption however irresistible. Liberty may repair her golden beams and with redoubled heart animate the country; the cry of loyalty will not long continue against the principles of liberty. Loyalty is a noble, a judicious, and a capacious principle, but in these countries loyalty distinct from liberty is corruption. . . .’

‘Yet I do not give up the country. I see her in a swoon but she is not dead; though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life and on her cheek a glow of beauty.

“Thou art not conquered : beauty’s ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death’s pale flag is not advanced there.”

While a plank of the vessel sticks together, I will not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail and carry the light barque of his faith with every new breath of wind. I will remain anchored here—with fidelity to the fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom, faithful to her fall.’²

Little wonder that Castlereagh in his reply stigmatised this peroration as ‘prophetic treason,’ and asked whether it was the part of a good citizen to excite the people against a new system which every man felt must soon become the law of the land. He accused Grattan of ‘inviting future rebellion by cloaking it with the idea of liberty.’ All the minister wished was that the measure should have fair play, that it should be left to be judged by its own merits and effects, and that the public mind should not now be poisoned against it so as to prevent its true operation from being felt and acknowledged.³ Grattan thereupon rose and delivered a ferocious philippic on the Chief Secretary, calling him a liar to his face and taunting him with arrogance. ‘If the noble

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, May 30. ² Grattan’s *Speeches*, iv. 21.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, May 27 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 240.

lord had been a settled statesman, he would have been inexcusable,' he declared, 'but as it was, his youth and his folly were his excuse.' Having thus rebuked his antagonist 'with the forbearance which puerility called for, but still with the severity which presumption deserved,' he announced his intention of again claiming the freedom of debate and of always stating his sentiments as freely as he had ever done so.¹ The cry was taken up on the Opposition benches, and another member (Peter Burrowes) charged the minister with 'lounging round the Castle' and being 'wickedly employed in plotting the destruction of his country while other men were displaying their courage and loyalty.'

Castlereagh rose from his place unperturbed, and Cooke was delighted with his impromptu reply, in which he gave Grattan quite as good as he had received. He declared in no unmeasured terms his contempt for 'the idle parade of parliamentary spirit which led to nothing and which denied in offensive terms what had never been uttered.' If any personal incivility were offered to him, it was not in Parliament that he should answer it; hence he would carefully avoid making himself an object for the interference of the House. 'Everyone must be sensible,' he added, 'that if any personal quarrel were desired, any insulting language used publicly where it could not be met as it deserved was the way to prevent and not to produce such a rencounter.' His speech was an amazing example of self-control. 'He had the evident superiority,' reported the faithful Under-Secretary. 'The House seemed pleased and all our friends were perfectly satisfied. It was a great proof of coolness, address, spirit and ability.'² He certainly carried off the honours of debate on this occasion and, as Brougham remarked in describing it, 'no one after that treated him with disrespect.'³ In fact, when he left the House he wished to send Grattan a challenge; and it was only with the utmost difficulty that he was dissuaded from this purpose by Cooke and his other friends, who represented that he would thereby destroy the good impression which his speech had just made, though even the Under-Secretary admitted that 'the *éclat* of a duel does much

¹ Grattan's *Speeches*, iv. 23. *Belfast News-Letter*, May 30.

² Cooke to King, May 26: H.O. Ireland, 93. *Belfast News-Letter*, May 30.

³ Lord Brougham, *Historical Sketches of the Statesmen of the Reign of George the Third*, ii. 125.

in this country of pistols.' ¹ Grattan it appears was now informed of the minister's service in excluding his name from the Report of the Secret Committee of the Lords, so that he made no effort to accelerate a meeting—indeed, according to Brougham, it was the knowledge of this circumstance which alone prevented it.²

The passage of the bill through its remaining stages, though safely accomplished within the next few weeks, was not devoid of arresting incident. When the question was put that the bill should be engrossed, one member introduced the unprecedented motion that it should be burnt by the common hangman; but the Speaker ruled this out of order.³ On the night on which Castlereagh moved the third reading (June 7) Francis Dobbs, who had astonished the House with his biblical allusions during a former debate, confidently asserted that the Messiah was about to appear on the holy hill of Armagh; and that although the Union might pass it could never become operative, since it was impossible that a Kingdom which the Book of Revelations showed to be under the special favour of Heaven should be absorbed in one of the ten Kingdoms typified in the image of Daniel.⁴ Shortly after this Plunket rose and roundly charged the minister with having employed bribery. Confused shouting broke out on all sides, and at length the galleries had to be cleared. A little later R. L. Edgeworth got up, and bowing to the Chair walked out of the House. He was immediately followed by two-thirds of the Opposition, who left in a body in order to avoid witnessing the final scene.⁵ There was much warmth and ill-temper in the House,' reported Castlereagh; but 'making all allowance for the number of disappointed individuals, particularly the gentlemen of the Bar, it was perhaps not beyond what we might naturally expect.'⁶ The Speaker was deeply affected; and when the question had been put and carried without a division and in the

¹ Cooke to King: March 1, May 27: H.O. Ireland, 93; *Corn. Corr.* iii. 242.

² Brougham, *op. cit.* ii. 126. See above, p. 268.

³ Cornwallis to Portland, June 7: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 248.

⁴ *Memoirs of Francis Dobbs, Esq. His Speeches on the Union, etc.* (Dublin, 1800), pp. 35-37.

⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, June 13. Cooke to King, June 7: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 250. *Memoirs of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 254 (ed. 1820).

⁶ Castlereagh to Portland, June 9: H.O. Ireland, 94.

face of the all but empty Opposition benches, he is said to have 'flung the bill upon the table with disgust and sunk into his chair with an exhausted spirit.'¹

A few days later the bill was carried up to the Lords by the Chief Secretary, and on its easy passage through the Upper House it was immediately sealed in the Privy Council and despatched to England by special messenger for ministerial scrutiny. The ancillary legislation regarding parliamentary representation and compensation speedily followed suit. The Speaker's wounded feelings were solaced by a vote of £2,500 a year for life in view of the suppression of his office—'a provision certainly very large,' admitted Castlereagh, 'but the effect of not subjecting the arrangement to the imputation of personal resentment will, I am persuaded, enable us to wind up our proceedings with more effect and tend much to soften the asperity of our opponents.'²

The measure passed its third reading in the House of Lords on June 13, and that night Lady Castlereagh gave a masked ball and *fête champêtre* in the grounds of the Secretary's Lodge in Phoenix Park to celebrate the successful issue of the struggle. 'An extensive marquee was erected in the lawn with communicating recesses, the whole superbly illuminated with variegated lamps,' so a contemporary newspaper described the scene. 'Similar lights were suspended from all the surrounding trees with the most enchanting effect.' The guests, who numbered about six hundred, 'were received in the different characters with the most engaging affability and attention by Lady Castlereagh' and her husband. Amongst the characters described as being 'best supported' were Hibernia and Britannia, 'who frequently shook hands,' a Father Paul, an Iroquois Indian, 'a taylor,' a French hairdresser, a Devil whose headdress was 'remarkably diabolical and properly adorned with horns,' and a blind piper 'whom the Chamberlain was frequently opportuned to turn out of the room, so closely did he imitate nature.' Dancing took place in the marquee; and as the invitations had gone out with the request that guests should appear 'dressed in our home manufactures,' the result was 'a most pleasing and advantageous display

¹ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 288. *Belfast News-Letter*, June 13.

² Castlereagh to Portland, June 11; to King, June 16: H.O. Ireland, 94.

of the produce of the Irish loom.' The masquerade was truly brilliant, and 'the chief nobility and gentry of the Kingdom' who attended evidently threw themselves with some abandon into the proceedings. 'The supper exhibited a profusion of all the delicacies the season could afford, and the wines were delicious and various as the vintages of the world.' 'It was altogether a scene of taste, elegance and magnificence that could not possibly be exceeded.' And, one might add, it was little wonder that some of the guests chose the occasion to seek some relaxation and diversion from their recent political exertions.¹

6

The final scene in the history of the Union struggle was played on August 1, 'on which auspicious day' it had been arranged that the measure should receive the Royal Assent in the House of Lords.² From an early hour crowds began to collect in College Green and soon overflowed into the adjoining streets. Towards noon members' carriages were seen moving slowly through the throng in the direction of the entrance to the Parliament House. The people remained unusually quiet, though now and again there was a slight disturbance when Major Sirr or one of his henchmen 'detected a person in the act of mistaking some other man's pocket handkerchief for his own.'³ An occasional outburst of hissing and groaning greeted the arrival of a particularly unpopular Unionist. As the Chief Secretary descended from his carriage at the door of the House, there is a tradition that someone behind him shouted 'Bloody Castlereagh,' and the cry was immediately taken up. The minister is now said 'to have turned round upon the mob with a glance of scorn and to have quelled them into momentary silence by the high-bred dignity of his presence and the habit of command expressed in every line of his countenance.'⁴

Suddenly there was a fanfare of trumpets and the approach of the Lord-Lieutenant was announced. His Excellency, resplendent

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, June 20.

² Castlereagh to King, July 21 : H.O. Ireland, 94.

³ T. De Quincey, *Works*, i. 220 (ed. Masson).

⁴ *New Quarterly Review*, iv. 153.

in blue and gold, entered the House of Lords with his retinue and all the peers in their robes stood and uncovered till he had taken his place on the Throne. Amongst the spectators in the Upper Chamber was Thomas De Quincey, not yet a convert to the joys of opium, for he was scarcely sixteen years old. He had learned much since his arrival in the country a few months previously. Even in the course of the journey his boyish modesty had received a rude shock when he discovered that a certain 'woman of rank celebrated for her beauty' was spending the night on board the Holyhead packet in the embraces of a promiscuous travelling acquaintance, and that too as she was returning to conjugal felicity in Dublin. He now noticed with a start that the lady in question was 'surrounded by a bevy of admirers' and enjoying the same spectacle as himself. Further reflections upon the frailty of human nature were interrupted by the appearance at the Bar of the Speaker attended by the faithful Commons. In the van of this gathering 'and drawing all eyes upon himself stood Lord Castlereagh.'¹

Then commenced the solemn recitation of the Acts passed during the session; and as the title of each was announced the answering '*Le Roi le veut*' or '*Soit fait comme il est désiré*' of the Deputy Clerk of the Parliaments bespoke the Royal Assent.² When he heard the fateful sentence 'An Act of Union of Great Britain and Ireland,' young Master De Quincey was surprised that 'no audible expression, no buzz, no murmur, no *susurrus* even, testified the feelings which doubtless rankled in many bosoms.' However, he noticed one person whose features were suddenly illumined by a smile—but whether of triumph or sarcasm he could not tell. 'It was Lord Castlereagh who at the moment when the irrevocable words were pronounced looked with a penetrating glance amongst a party of ladies.'³ De Quincey was unable to discover the fortunate recipient of this attention. Perhaps it was the 'fair but frail enchantress of the packet,' though Emily would seem to be a more likely choice for she was also a member of the group, and Robert was nothing if not faithful. After this significant episode the minister's features resumed their former immobility and the recitation continued.

¹ De Quincey, i. 208-209, 221.

² *H. of C. Journals*, xix. 296-300.

³ De Quincey, i. 222-223.

It was a long list and constituted a proud memorial to the legislative industry of the last session of the Irish Parliament—wine, annuities, pawnbrokers, wide streets, playing cards, insolvent debtors, the Liffey Walls, ‘the immoderate use of spirituous liquors,’ ‘obstructions and annoyances in the town of Belfast,’ and the ‘Female Orphan House in the Circular Road,’ were some of the objects which it covered. The last measure of all to receive the Royal Assent and the last legislative Act of the Irish Parliament was ‘An Act to dissolve the marriage of Alexander Montgomery, Esquire, Captain in His Majesty’s Monaghan Regiment of Militia, with Mary Montgomery, otherwise Chute, his now wife, and to enable him to marry again.’

As the assembly broke up and the peers laid aside their robes, many of them for the last time, Tom De Quincey was struck by the humour of the situation, and could not help wishing ‘that a party of Jewish old-clothesmen would at this moment have appeared and made a loud bidding.’ On the Green outside all was orderly and the Unionists reached their homes without molestation, a state of affairs probably due to Major Sirr and the police, who were busy ‘laying down the law (as before) about pocket handkerchiefs to old and young practitioners.’ The Lord-Lieutenant recorded a similar impression of popular obedience during his drive back to the Castle: ‘There was not a murmur heard in the street, nor I believe an expression of ill humour throughout the whole city of Dublin. Had anyone prophesied this when the measure was first proposed, he would not have met with more credit than my friend Mr. Dobbs did respecting the appearance of the Messiah at Armagh.’¹ To many it was indeed difficult to believe that the seemingly impossible had been achieved and the much-disputed measure had passed into law. ‘I trust,’ wrote its author in the first flush of imperial pride, that it ‘will operate more powerfully on our future prospects than any event which has occurred in the annals of these countries, and give us advantages either in the event of peace or war which the Battle of Marengo cannot deprive us of.’²

On the following day the first election of representative peers to sit in the Imperial House of Lords took place, and immediately

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Aug. 2 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 285.

² Castlereagh to King, Aug. 2 : H.O. Ireland, 94.

afterwards the life of the Irish Parliament was determined by prorogation.¹

The other arrangements of which Castlereagh had charge were unfortunately not concluded with such ease as the legislative Act. First there was the question of the Union peerages. Cornwallis had been authorised to hold out these distinctions to the more influential and desirable supporters of the measure, but his first list which was sent over in June came as such a surprise to the Home Office that Portland jibbed and suggested that at least they should stand over till *after* the first election of Irish representative peers to the United Parliament.² Castlereagh was justly annoyed at what he conceived to be a shabby trick on the part of the English ministry, and he was accordingly at pains to make it plain on the other side of the Channel that if the Irish Government was 'not enabled to keep faith with the various individuals who have acted upon a principle of confidence in their honour,' it would be morally impossible for either Cornwallis or himself to remain in their present situations. 'If they imagine they can take up popular grounds by disappointing their supporters and by disgracing the Irish Government, I think they will find themselves mistaken,' he wrote in confidence to Cooke, who was in London at this time. 'It will be no secret what has been promised, and by what means the Union has been secured. Disappointment will encourage, not prevent disclosure; and the only effect of such a proceeding on their part will be to add the weight of their testimony to that of the Anti-Unionists in proclaiming the profligacy

¹ *H. of C. Journals*, xix. 301. In 1802 the Parliament House was sold to the Bank of Ireland with the secret stipulation that the purchasers would 'subdivide what was the former House of Commons into several rooms for the Check Offices, and would apply what was the House of Lords to some other use which would leave nothing of its former appearance': Colchester MSS. (cited Lecky, v. 418). When the Government demanded the Speaker's Mace from Foster, the latter refused to surrender it, saying that 'until the body that had entrusted it to his keeping demanded it back he would preserve it for them': J. T. Gilbert, *History of Dublin*, iii. 180. The Mace, together with the Speaker's Chair, ultimately passed into the possession of Foster's grandson, Viscount Massereene and Ferrard, at Antrim Castle. See illustrated descriptive article by J. Vineycomb in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, x. 97 (July 1904). The Chair was destroyed some years ago by fire, but the solid silver-gilt Mace was preserved, and is still in the possession of the Massereene family. An exact replica of the Chair has been acquired by the Irish Literary Society of London.

² Portland to Cornwallis, June 12: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 321.

of the means by which the measure has been accomplished.' Even if the creations were only postponed as the English minister suggested, this course would, in his opinion, show 'that we are ashamed to face the act we are about to perfect.'¹

Cooke passed the substance of this letter on to the minister with an accompanying remonstrance; and this move had an immediate effect, for the next Irish mail carried despatches from Portland intimating his acquiescence on the general question.² The Irish Government in turn gave way on a few details which appeared particularly objectionable to Whitehall. One claim by a peer on behalf of his natural son was, for instance, refused; and Sir John Blaquiere, who imagined that his assistance entitled him to a representative peerage, though unconnected with the country by birth or considerable property, was induced by the Chief Secretary after much unpleasantness to waive his pretensions 'for *more substantial objects*.'³ On the whole the Union peerages cannot be considered excessive in number when compared with the wholesale creations of former viceroys. In all nineteen Irish peerages were created solely on account of Union services; four Irish peers received English titles and fifteen others were promoted in the Irish peerage for the same reason.⁴

There was also much business to be done in the sphere of Crown patronage, for by this means the claims of less consequential Government supporters were gratified. Unfortunately the details of most of these transactions have been lost; they were largely in the hands of the Under-Secretaries Cooke and Marsden, who destroyed their papers.⁵ The correspondence which these officials conducted with Castlereagh on the subject was princi-

¹ Castlereagh to Cooke, June 21: *Cast. Corr.* iii. 321.

² Portland to Cornwallis, June 27; to Castlereagh, July 2: *Cast. Corr.* iii. 343, 347.

³ Castlereagh to Cooke, July 12: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 278. Blaquiere got an Irish peerage, a political pension of £1,000 a year and ample compensation for the loss of his sinecures.

⁴ *Corn. Corr.* iii. 318. The lists given in the *Cornwallis Correspondence* contain a number of inaccuracies. At least five titles stated to have been conferred for Union services (Henniker, Erris, Thomond, O'Neill and Bandon) were unconnected with the question, having been either promised during a previous viceroyalty or else the outcome of some other arrangement with the Government and their recipients. It is very doubtful if two others in the lists (Lecale and Castlestewart) were conferred for such services.

⁵ Lecky, v. 305. *Corn. Corr.* i. Preface, p. vi. MacDonagh, *passim*.

pally of a personal nature, but some letters did pass between them, and a few have survived to show the numerous difficulties with which they were beset in the course of negotiations. It was obviously impossible to satisfy every claim immediately, and the less pressing were put off with promises. A number of these remained unfulfilled on the Chief Secretary's resignation in 1801 and were subsequently repudiated by the new ministry. As Castlereagh told his successor in office, they were 'arrangements pressed upon us by the necessity of the case at a moment when we were not altogether in a situation consistent with the safety of the measure entrusted to us to decide merely upon the personal merits of those who had the means to forward or impede it.' 'The number of applications to which you have been exposed as the result of that measure,' he added, 'will enable you to judge of the embarrassment under which we acted.'¹ However, the majority of the promises at this time were carried out, and it is significant none of the more prominent Anti-Unionists (except Grattan) refused a share of the favours which were distributed under the new *régime*. In the years that followed, Plunket, Ponsonby, Foster, Saurin, Bushe, Curran, Goold, Burrowes, Bowes Daly and Barrington all accepted official preferment.²

7

Grattan used to say that of those who supported the Government in Parliament during the Union struggle not more than seven were unbribed.³ In this statement Grattan has unfortunately put a wider construction upon the term bribery than it is justly capable of bearing.⁴ There is no trustworthy evidence which I can find to substantiate the oft-made assertion that direct money bribes were given to members in return for their votes, although for their literary exertions and other political services they did in certain cases receive cash payments either in the shape of capital sums or pensions. Borough patrons who themselves sat

¹ Castlereagh to C. Abbot, Oct. 17, 1801: Colchester MSS. (cited Lecky, v. 305).

² T. D. Ingram, *History of the Irish Union*, 135.

³ H. Grattan, *Life of Henry Grattan*, v. 113.

⁴ On this see especially Lecky, v. 307-9; also Lord Brabourne, *Facts and Fictions in Irish History*, 28.

in the House of Commons were awarded pecuniary compensation if their boroughs were disfranchised. A certain number of these individuals vacated their seats before the end of the session and subsequently sold them to the Treasury: for instance, R. L. Edgeworth records that as late as March 1800 he was offered 3,000 guineas for his seat.¹ But these transactions cannot rightly be regarded as bribery, since contract of sale was a recognised mode of disposing of borough property, and the Opposition frequently put up the bidding. Castlereagh indeed considered the question of compensation in respect of such loss 'as the hinge upon which the whole measure [of Union] turned,'² and in view of the extensive borough traffic which had been conducted in Ireland for over a century his valuation of each seat at £7,500 was not unduly high. It is significant that the Compensation Act which gave effect to this arrangement directly conceded an individual property right in borough representation.³

It should be noted that specific charges of bribery were never brought forward in the Irish Parliament. They were the outcome of the subsequent agitation for the repeal of the Union and a strained interpretation latterly put upon some of Castlereagh's expressions in his confidential correspondence. One letter in particular has been frequently quoted in proof of them, and it must be admitted that the sentence on which they are based when divorced from its context appears very suspicious. It was written to King, the English Under-Secretary, in the spring of 1800:

'*Private and Secret.*

DUBLIN CASTLE, 27th [February 1800].

'... We require *your assistance*, and you must be prepared to enable us to fulfil the expectations which it was impossible to avoid creating at the moment of difficulty. You may be assured we have rather erred on the side of moderation. . . .'

The letter from which the above extract has been taken was unfortunately not printed in full by the editor of the *Cornwallis Correspondence*.⁴ In its emasculated version it not unnaturally gave rise to the supposition that the author must be referring to the votes in favour of the Union which he had purchased. But a

¹ Edgeworth to Darwin, March 31, 1800: *Memoirs of R. L. Edgeworth*, ii. 253 (ed. 1820).

² Castlereagh to King, May 20: H.O. Ireland, 93.

³ 40 Geo. III (Ir.), c. 34. Porritt, ii. 522.

⁴ *Corn. Corr.* iii. 201.

glance at the original, which is preserved among the Home Office archives in the Public Record Office of England, makes it clear that the demand is for a very different purpose.¹ The commercial clauses of the Union Bill (Article VI) were at this time in committee ; and Castlereagh, who, as has already been seen, was anxious to conciliate any manufacturing interests at all likely to be adversely affected, had recently promised the cotton industry some financial assistance.² In response to his request Pitt agreed to let him have from £8,000 to £10,000 for five years for this purpose.³

Daniel O'Connell at his trial for conspiracy in 1844 asserted, apparently without contradiction, that apart altogether from borough compensation, no less than £3,000,000 were 'expended in actual payment of the persons who voted for the Union.'⁴ A close examination of the confidential correspondence which passed between Whitehall and Dublin Castle during this period has revealed that nothing like this sum was spent in the promotion of the measure. In the years 1799 and 1800 sums of money were from time to time sent over to Castlereagh in cash, but these did not exceed £15,000. Then a saving to the extent of about £18,000 had been effected in the Irish Civil List.⁵ The Secret Service fund was overdrawn to the amount of between £20,000 and £30,000, but it is not known how much money (if any) came from this source in gaining ministerial support.⁶ Thus it is certain that not more than £50,000 altogether was spent by Government above what was paid out in borough and office compensation. It is equally certain that the greater part of this money went in the purchase of seats in the House of Commons, for it will be remembered that at the opening of the session in 1800 no less than thirty-nine writs were moved.⁷ The remainder went to reward

¹ H.O. Ireland, 93.

² See above, p. 353.

³ Cooke to Castlereagh, April 5 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 260.

⁴ *Report of the Case of the Queen v. Daniel O'Connell and others in the Court of Queen's Bench in Ireland, 1844*, at p. 628.

⁵ Cooke to Castlereagh, June 23 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 335.

⁶ Cooke to Castlereagh, June 5, 1801 : Pitt MSS. 327. In a review of Ingram's *History of the Legislative Union* which he wrote for *The Nineteenth Century* (Oct. 1887) Gladstone contended that a sum much in excess of these figures was supplied from the Secret Service fund : *N.C.* xxii. 462. This was conclusively disproved by Ingram in his reply : *N.C.* xxii. 787.

⁷ See above, p. 341.

the services of Unionist pamphleteers and propagandists. Had direct money bribes been offered by any Castle official for votes, such a practice must have come to the ears of Cornwallis. Commenting on the fact that the Opposition was offering £5,000 for a vote early in 1800, the Lord-Lieutenant stated that 'if we had the means and were disposed to make such vile use of them, we dare not trust the credit of government in the hands of such rascals.'¹ This is not the language of a viceroy whose Chief Secretary according to O'Connell was paying £8,000 for a vote in favour of the measure.² If indeed any direct money payments were made to supporters *before* service rendered (and there is no express proof of a single instance), they were made by a subordinate official on his own initiative and the transactions were unauthorised. The nearest approach to this form of corruption is a case on the authority of Barrington, where an individual procured the remission of a debt of £3,000.³ A large number of pensions were granted to individuals, principally in respect of offices abolished by the Union, and as they did not extend as a rule beyond the lives of their recipients it was on the whole a national advantage that such persons as 'The Lord-Lieutenant's Rat-Catcher at the Castle' and the 'Necessary Woman to the Privy Council' were compensated for the loss of their places.⁴

It would be idle to deny that the strongest pressure was brought to bear by Castlereagh in order to obtain support for the measure of Union; and that methods were openly employed which, though they enjoyed the warm approval of both Governments and the Churches, must undoubtedly be pronounced corrupt if judged by modern standards. But the sober historian would no more judge Castlereagh's conduct on this question by later-day tests of political morality than he would, for example, pronounce an old wine to be of bad quality because its taste was unfamiliar to the drinker. The minister had directed all his energies to the achievement of an object which he was convinced was for the ultimate

¹ Cornwallis to Lichfield, Feb. 8, 1800: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 184.

² *Report of Discussion in the Dublin Corporation on the Repeal of the Union* (1834), 41.

³ Barrington, *Rise and Fall*, 281.

⁴ The complete list of office-holders compensated with amounts paid was published by order of the House of Commons in 1844. It was reprinted in R. M. Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union*, 414-417.

good of Ireland. The times were critical and half-measures were useless if the existence of a corrupt local administration was to be terminated and a prolonged period of internal peace guaranteed. 'The Irish Government is certainly now liable to the charge of having gone too far in complying with the demands of individuals,' admitted Castlereagh when his main work was finished: 'but, had the Union miscarried and the failure been traceable to a reluctance on the part of Government to interest a sufficient number of supporters in its success, I am inclined to think that we should have met with and in fact deserved less mercy.'¹ If therefore he had acted exclusively with reference to English representations, the measure might have been lost in spite of a considerable expenditure of patronage. It is unfortunate that the means by which the Union was carried should have been so grotesquely exaggerated by nationalist sentiment, whereas the demerits of the local legislature have been so frequently overlooked by the same authority.

If Castlereagh by his abilities saved Ireland from a worse fate than actually befell her in the nineteenth century, the fact has gained but tardy recognition. Indeed only his most intimate contemporaries realised the value of his work and the honesty of his motives. He refused to accept any honour for himself at the time. Cornwallis recommended his father to be a peer of the United Kingdom, but Londonderry contented himself with an assurance from the English ministers that he could obtain a permanent seat in the Upper House whenever he or any of his descendants should care to apply for it.² 'The real fact is,' wrote Cooke to his Chief, 'that they hope you will make the same figure and take the same lead which you have done in Ireland, and they sadly want some character on whom business may repose.'³ There was a seeming dearth of political talent both on and behind the Treasury Bench at St. Stephen's. Pitt's health was showing unmistakable signs of breaking under the strain of a seven years' war and two bottles of port a day, Dundas had seldom obtruded himself of late for he was worrying over the

¹ Castlereagh to Camden, June 25, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 340.

² Portland to Castlereagh, July 2 ; to Cornwallis, June 27 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 345, 347.

³ Cooke to Castlereagh, July 2 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 350.

navy accounts, Windham was too unreliable and rash to become a leader, Ryder and Pelham were invalids. Of the minister's more youthful disciples Hawkesbury was at best mediocre, and Canning, who had not yet proved himself an administrator, possessed little weight and no rank. There remained only Castlereagh, and even now discerning students of politics could see that the Prime Minister's mantle was destined to fall on the shoulders of this outstanding young Irishman of scarcely two-and-thirty summers.

He had won his spurs right bravely, and this the English ministers were not slow to realise. But it needed a fellow-Irishman to estimate the amazing manner of his achievement. 'Lord Castlereagh has to be sure done wonders,' wrote his erstwhile private secretary, Alexander Knox, towards the close of the arduous session of 1800. 'It seems also as if he were made for the very work. And how probable is it that if this event had not occurred his talents at least to their extent would never have been known! How could an English Secretary—let his powers have been ever so great—have achieved what he has done? And yet his coming in at first and his staying afterwards were purely accidental. Is it not like the interference of Providence?'¹

¹ Knox to Marsden, June 12: Dublin Castle MSS.

CHAPTER X

RESIGNATION : OUT OF OFFICE

I

'THE Union has removed a great impediment to a better system ; but the Union will do little in itself, unless it be followed up.' With these significant words Castlereagh concluded a memorandum on the Catholic question which he commenced to draw up for the English ministry as soon as the Act of Union had received the Royal Assent.¹ There were especially three measures which in his opinion and that of Cornwallis must supplement the Union in order to ensure its successful operation—namely, Catholic emancipation which would involve the admission of Catholics to the Imperial Parliament and to the political offices from which they had hitherto been excluded, the commutation of tithe rent charges for a fixed money payment, and the State endowment of the Catholic and Dissenting clergy generally under conditions calculated to preserve their loyalty. These subjects had been mentioned by Castlereagh repeatedly at the Cabinet meetings which he attended at Downing Street. 'If Foster has courage to join the Catholics, the game is up,' the young Under-Secretary Canning had written. 'But I rely on the strength of his pledges and prejudices on this point.'² So impregnated was the Anti-Unionist party in Ireland with the principles of Protestant Ascendancy, the English ministers concluded that an alliance between the Catholics and the Opposition must split the party in half. It was largely the possibility of this contingency which determined the Cabinet on the policy of conceding emancipation after Union. Furthermore, for fear of

¹ 'On the Expediency of making Further Concessions to the Catholics,' endorsed 'London, Sept. 1800': H.O. Ireland, 99; *Cast. Corr.* iv. 392-400.

² G. Canning to W. Windham, Feb. 4, 1799: *Windham Papers*, ii. 92. Canning was Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. For Canning's views on the Union see W. Alison Phillips, *George Canning*, 37-45 (London 1903).

alienating powerful Protestant interests in both countries, no specific declarations had been made or promises held out to the Catholics as a body at that time.¹

When Castlereagh returned to Dublin for the final struggle in the autumn of 1799, the leading Catholics were informed that they might reasonably expect the realisation of their desires in a united legislature, provided that Government might rely on their goodwill and support in the coming crisis. Since the Catholics had previously shown themselves disinclined to lend their assistance without a satisfactory declaration of policy by authority, both Cornwallis and Castlereagh, it will be remembered, had strongly expressed their anxiety to the English ministers that in winning them over by vague assurances of future favours they would not subsequently be liable to the charge of deceit. Pitt, who was then in the seventeenth year of his autocratic rule, certainly entertained no serious doubts that an Emancipation Act would be readily passed by a United Parliament, if not immediately at least as soon as peace had been concluded with France. Castlereagh therefore considered himself safe in hinting at future liberal treatment of the Catholics in the speech at College Green on February 5. He did not, it is true, promise either emancipation or payment of priests. He merely stated that their claims could be discussed and decided on in an Imperial Parliament 'divested of these local circumstances which produce irritation and jealousy and prevent a fair and reasonable decision.' At the same time he denied the accusation of having bribed the Catholic clergy, as 'an arrangement both for the Catholic and Dissenting clergy had been long in the contemplation of his Majesty's Government.'² Like the Lord-Lieutenant, he was conscious that the measure could not have been passed without the alliance of the leading Catholics, lay and ecclesiastic, which guaranteed the neutrality if not the support of their followers, and that without the speedy grant of concessions any hope of lasting tranquillity in Ireland was impossible. He was therefore grateful for the opportunity presented by his deferred visit to London to redeem the pledge—if one may so term the understanding which has just been described.

¹ See above, pp. 332-334.

² See *Speech of the Rt. Hon. Lord Viscount Castlereagh on an Incorporating Union with Great Britain, February 5, 1800* (Dublin, 1800).

Castlereagh set out early in August, travelling only with Elliot. It was the first official journey for three years on which he had not been accompanied by his wife, and it was a circumstance which he was later to regret. The heat in London that summer was terrific, and all respectable society had left the capital by this time. Emily was consequently induced to remain in Phoenix Park, and her husband promised to console her during his absence by every possible post. He went by the north, taking in the Down summer assizes *en route*. At Downpatrick he noted with satisfaction the small number of cases for trial. There were only three capital sentences passed, and two of these curiously enough were on women for highway robbery. Of the other sentences, the most severe was passed on a woman for 'stealing shawls in Newry market'—it was 'to be burned in the hand and imprisoned six months.'¹

The assizes finished on the 11th, and by the middle of the month he was safely past Portpatrick. On the night of the 17th he wrote from Barnaby Moor:

'BARNABY MOOR, *Sunday night*.

'I cannot go to bed, my dearest Emily, without telling you that we are so far advanced upon our journey. The posting on this road is far better than thro' Wales. We have travelled the whole way with a pair of horses to my chaise, and we have come from Greta Bridge to-day which is 94 miles. We shall sleep to-morrow night within 60 miles of London. I have been miserably off for a library—only the first vol. of an absurd novel in which the hero gets to an unknown country; and as the other vols. are missing I must leave him there. . . .'

Two days later he reached town 'broiled to death.' He immediately saw the Prime Minister and Home Secretary, who 'promised to expedite my business,' and after a short interval he went off satisfied 'to dine at a chop-house with Elliot.'²

He had learned from Pitt that there would be a slight delay in summoning a Cabinet, since all the other ministers were out of town. 'The town is quite empty,' he wrote a day or two after his arrival, 'and so hot that I am half dead.' He was therefore free for a short time to devote himself uninterrupted to his private

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, August 19. Castlereagh to Portland, August 2: H.O. Ireland, 94.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 20: Londonderry MSS.

affairs, which he found required some attention. First there was the house in Cleveland Square, which had been let during the winter and was now 'much the worse of its late tenant.'¹ He decided that it must be immediately painted and cleaned, and he excused himself to Emily in arranging for this renovation to be carried out on a generous scale. 'Our house below stairs is very inconvenient and the smell of dinner intolerable. . . . If we are to remain in Cleveland Square and to see any company or keep anything like our present establishment,' he observed, 'I really think this alteration not only expedient but indispensable.'² Then there was their Dublin house in Merrion Street which he had on a lease from Tom Conolly, and which was still on his hands, though they had left it at the end of the previous year for the more sumptuous residence of Mornington House.³ He had been informed that the Board of Inland Navigation in Ireland, which had recently been constituted by him to improve the canal system of the country, desired the house for offices, so he directed the lease to be assigned to this corporation, 'by which we shall wash our hands of it.'⁴

He managed to escape for a short spell to the country, first visiting the Camdens at Bayham Abbey in Sussex and going on to spend a few days with the Duke of Portland at Bulstrode. From the latter he wrote to his wife: 'We have here Cooke and Elliot, Lady Bath and three daughters not very agreeable. I like however the eldest as she used to be very kind to me when I was knight-errant enough to fall in love with a certain lady.'⁵ Emily also had some work for him. 'I had executed your commissions before your letter arrived,' a dutiful husband told her. 'The chain would have reproached me had I forgot it. . . . I have added one to be worn on a white gown which I think pretty. Your coronets are below in a small hat box and I shall add a hat.'⁶ He was called back to town by the distressing news that his younger brother, Alexander ('Alec'), was seriously ill. Not yet in his nineteenth year the boy had set his heart on entering the navy, in which service he had lately obtained a commission

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 21 : Londonderry MSS.

² *Id.* Sept. 6.

³ See above, p. 338.

⁴ Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 7.

⁵ *Id.* Sept. 5.

⁶ Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 30 : Londonderry MSS.

and had actually fought at the Battle of St. Vincent. But in spite of the open-air life which he led, consumption, the grim scourge of so many families both high and low in the eighteenth century, had claimed him ; and he was now lying ' in a very delicate and indeed desperate state ' at Brompton. Castlereagh hastened to his bedside, whither his father and mother had already been summoned, but he regretfully realised that the invalid's ' fate was sealed,' and that he could do very little for him.¹

2

Meanwhile the Chief Secretary had also turned to his memorandum on the subject of the Catholics ; and when this statement had been completed, he proceeded to write two comprehensive papers on the tithe question and to arrange a scheme for the payment by the State of the Irish nonconforming clergy, Catholic as well as Presbyterian. The first aspect of the Catholic claims with which he dealt was the proposed alteration in the Test Act, so as to admit the Catholics to Parliament and political offices. He argued that now the Union had been accomplished, the interests within the Kingdom which dissented from the Established Church were more naturally open to an alliance with Jacobinism (' the enemy of the present day ') if they were to be excluded from rather than made participators in the advantages of the Constitution. This primary concession would, he submitted, make the Catholics in Ireland conscious that this exclusion had hitherto been the necessary consequence of a separate legislature, and that the concession itself when carried into effect had arisen out of incorporation with Great Britain. He stated the merits of the case plainly :

' . . . It is idle to hope that Dissenters of any description can ever be so zealously attached subjects as those who are of the established religion ; but the question is, what system without hazarding the powers of the State itself, is best calculated if not warmly to attach at least to disarm the hostility of those classes in the community who cannot be got rid of and must be governed ? This latter consideration is of most pressing necessity with regard to Ireland. That Kingdom must in fact be considered as a country of sectarists ; and, if we are to indulge an expectation that it may be redeemed from its present

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 7 : Londonderry MSS.

miseries, it must be by the adoption of some system which, without relaxing the energy of Government, shall relieve the public mind from its fundamental principles of perpetual struggle.

‘ Unless the power and stability of the United Government shall afford the means in safety of adopting some means of compromise amongst the contending factions, the difficulty of governing the country will rapidly increase, as every year adds materially to the relative importance of the dissenting interests. If the same internal struggle continues, Great Britain will derive little beyond an increase of expense from the Union. If she is to govern Ireland upon a garrison principle, perhaps in abolishing the separate Parliament she has parted as well with her most effectual means as with her most perfect justification. In uniting with Ireland she has abdicated the colonial relation ; and, if hereafter that country is to prove a resource rather than a burden to Great Britain, an effort must be made to govern it through the public mind.’

He pointed out that on account of the difficulties in her way Ireland required a greater share of ministerial attention than had Scotland in 1707. At the time of the Anglo-Scottish Union Scotland was but thinly populated, and the habits of the people were so regular that, with the exception of the two rebellions which sprang from a feeling of attachment to the exiled family, the country might be said to have subsequently governed herself. Ireland, on the contrary, was highly populous and split up into internecine factions. ‘ The law is imperfectly obeyed and very ill administered by the magistrates who are too frequently partisans rather than judges—in short, the tranquillity of the country is alone preserved, even in the degree in which it exists, by the perpetual intervention of the hand of Government exercising the most summary powers.’¹

The second aspect of the Catholic question was presented by tithes, which as an existing evil directly affecting the bulk of the community was more important if anything than the first. Tithes are in essence a deduction made from the profits of land for the purpose of affording an income to the clergy of the Established Church. In Ireland the system worked the greatest injustice, since the clergy who received this compulsory payment only

¹ ‘ On the Expediency of making Further Concessions to the Catholics ’ : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 392-400. The original text is preserved with other papers relating to the Roman Catholics in H.O. Ireland, 99. It is endorsed in Castlereagh’s handwriting, ‘ London, Sept. 1800.’

ministered to about one-eighth of the total population, while the remaining seven-eighths, in addition to paying tithes to clergy who opposed their creeds and were frequently not even resident among them, had to support their own priests and ministers as well. The method of tithe assessment and collection by the tithe proctor or farmer and the power to levy distress in default of payment were particularly objectionable. Its incidence was also very inequitable, being much heavier in the south than in the north. Most unjust of all was the exemption of pasture land from liability. There was no legal basis for this exemption ; it was principally due to the terrorism which large landowners who possessed advowsons exercised over the incumbents of their benefices.¹ Pasture had thus been encouraged to an immense extent at the expense of tillage, and thus the poor farmer being pressed below the level of subsistence had frequently to choose between starvation and emigration. The neglect of the local administration to take any ameliorative steps had led to the commission of the most appalling outrages ; in fact, from 1760 onwards parts of the country had been in a state of continuous disorder. Grattan had repeatedly agitated the question at College Green during the last quarter of the eighteenth century ; but as the Government was unwilling to countenance any remedy which might diminish the value of its ecclesiastical patronage, all his motions met with the same fate.²

Realising that tithes had for years been a prolific source of agrarian crime, Castlereagh drafted a scheme for their compulsory commutation into a fixed rent charge to be paid by landlords. 'As the basis of any such proceeding,' he remarked, 'you must be prepared to state that the interest of the public with a view to the improvement of land requires that the clergy should part with their rights to payment of tithe in kind on receiving a just and full equivalent ; such is the ground on which individual property is always made subservient to the public improvement or accommodation.' He therefore suggested that the amount of the charge as acreable rent be based upon what the tithes were expected to

¹ The exemption of pasture land from tithe was voted by one House of Parliament only, and therefore had no legal validity ; but the poor man could not be expected to know this : Lecky, ii. 14.

² Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 25, 82, 163.

produce during the ensuing twenty-one years in different districts—this productivity to be determined by royal commissions, legally empanelled juries, or arbitrators appointed by the interests affected, whichever should seem most desirable to the authorities. 'It is much to be doubted whether the mass of the clergy would be averse to such an arrangement,' he concluded; 'in general, they feel the inconvenience of their present mode of payment and are desirous of being relieved from it; added to which the principle in question preserves to them for ever a progressive increase of profits in proportion to the rent of the land; whereas at present in point of fact the improvement of tithe by no means keeps pace with the improvement of rent. This consideration of itself will naturally recommend it to the clergy as securing to them their station in the scale of society, without exposing them to the odium of a perpetual struggle in defence of their own interests.'¹

Finally he came to what was perhaps the most important and at the same time the most delicate feature of all in the question—the method by which financial provision might be best made by the State for the Catholic and Dissenting clergy as a whole. No part of his admirable paper on this subject has been hitherto published.² The opening sentences reveal his shrewd political foresight and judgment.

'In looking to the present state of Ireland, nothing seems to be of more importance than for the Government by some means or other to establish an influence over the Dissenting clergy, Catholic as well as Protestant. These two classes then may be considered as in a great degree forming the opinions and guiding the conduct of seven-eighths of the community, and it seems difficult to conceive that the State can ever be secure unless it can in some degree connect these men in interest with it.

'An arrangement connected with their private interest is likely to be more operative and less a subject of jealousy than any very direct interference in the government of their respective churches.

'Both the Catholic and Dissenting clergy are desirous of obtaining a provision from the State, and they have received direct assurances that an arrangement will be made for them without delay, provided

¹ 'Tithes,' two papers: first undated, second endorsed 'September, 1800': H.O. Ireland, 99; *Cast. Corr.* iv. 193-205.

² Endorsed 'Dissenting Clergy, London, Sept. 1, 1800': H.O. Ireland, 99.

they are disposed to accommodate in the detail to the wishes of Government.

'The Catholic clergy from a reluctance to suffer any consideration of their private interest to take the lead of the general Catholic objects are less pressing in their solicitations than the Dissenters who are not restrained by any corresponding embarrassment. It is much to be apprehended that the Catholic clergy could not venture to accept any pecuniary advantages placing them in a considerable degree under the influence of the State, so long as the question affecting the laity is undisposed of ; and any step taken to open a negotiation with them on the detail of their own arrangement must necessarily lead to an explanation on the subject.

'So much however has been said to the clergy of both persuasions that I think Government cannot delay going into the question, and a plan ought to be decided on.'

So far as the Catholic clergy was concerned, the assurances to which the writer refers had been first given in the previous year on the direct authority of the Home Secretary, and the leading Catholics, lay and ecclesiastic, had professed themselves well satisfied. They had been reassured by Castlereagh's public utterances after his return from London in the autumn, and the general principle when submitted to Rome had received the unqualified benediction of the Pope.¹ In return the Catholic prelates had expressed their willingness to give the Crown a power of veto over the names of all persons whom they should submit for Irish clerical appointments to the Holy See. No Catholic bishop, for instance, could be appointed who had not previously been approved by the Crown (as was the case in the Gallican Church). Furthermore, Castlereagh suggested that an efficient form of license should be established for all Catholic priests, making it highly penal for an unlicensed priest to officiate. The want of such a regulation was then felt as much by the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland as by the State. It was also desirable to enlarge the college at Maynooth, and to require that every priest thenceforth ordained in the country should graduate there. 'The system of education in that seminary might be so regulated,' he pointed out, 'as to guard against the danger at present arising from the priests being generally educated abroad in the most bigoted system of the old school.' The initial sum

¹ His Holiness hoped for 'un onesta provisione': Hippisley to Castlereagh, Sept. 23, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 384.

proposed by way of endowment was about £65,000 a year, and there should be a graduated scale of payments.¹

The case of the Presbyterians was somewhat different. They were already in receipt of a small State grant known as the *Regium Donum*. It was the outcome of William III's munificence, and had in fact been paid annually to the Synod almost without a break since 1690. The Presbyterians were generically Scottish and almost exclusively confined to Ulster. Though they had not suffered as much as the Catholics from the Penal Laws under the long *régime* of Protestant Ascendancy, they had never lost the old Covenanting hatred of Episcopacy, and moreover from 1790 onwards they had, as has already been seen, shown a marked preference for republicanism as the best form of political as well as ecclesiastical government.² They were deep in the United Irish treason till the sanguinary events of the rebellion in Wexford convinced them of the horrors of a Popish democracy. Thenceforward what Castlereagh called 'their cold reasoning disaffection' had gradually changed to quiescent loyalty, and in a number of cases they had materially helped forward the Union in the north.³ The Chief Secretary had thought it worth while to pay them some attention during the struggle, and in 1799 he sponsored a project for the foundation of a university for Dissenters in Ulster.⁴ The latter had, however, come to nothing, since the Home Office turned it down on the curious grounds that as the students in Trinity College were already too apt to injure their health by overwork it was not desirable to stimulate Dublin University to any further exertions by the foundation of another institution on similar lines.⁵

At present the *Regium Donum* amounted to about £5,000 a year, and this gave each minister about £30. Castlereagh proposed to increase the bounty at least double, for the ministers

¹ As follows :

4 Archbishops at £500 each	-	-	total est.	£2,000
18 Bishops at £300 each	-	-	" "	5,400
36 Vicars-General from £100 to £150 each	"	"	" "	9,000
1,200 Parish Priests from £30 to £50 each	"	"	" "	48,000
				<u>£64,400</u>

² See above, pp. 86, 178.

³ See above, pp. 251, 285.

⁴ 'Plan for a University for Ulster': *Cast. Corr.* ii. 64.

⁵ Portland to Cornwallis, Aug. 31, 1799: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 381.

'being in general married their income ought to be superior to the Catholic.' Instead of the money being handed over to the Treasurer of the Synod in a lump sum, it should also be distributed according to a fixed scale of remuneration in accordance with the needs of individual congregations.¹ 'At present the Synod is much divided,' he pointed out ; 'one party loyally disposed, anxious to commit themselves with Government and to accommodate to their wishes, the other of equivocal principles, jealous of State interference and desirous of having the increased provision granted on the same footing as the former bounty. The latter party is at present the most numerous body, but by management and attention they may be dissolved and a Government party for the first time established in that body.' Although their case was perhaps not so pressing as that of the Irish priesthood, which had hitherto been mostly recruited from the ranks of a superstitious and disloyal peasantry, both were peculiarly important at this time by reason of the parts they had played in the late conflict ; and to the most casual student of politics it was plain that here was an admirable opportunity of attaching each of these bodies permanently to imperial interests.

3

The Cabinet met in Downing Street early in September, but it was at first occupied with more pressing business than that which formed the main object of Castlereagh's visit. M. Otto, the French agent in London for the exchange of prisoners, had recently made overtures with a view to concluding an armistice, and the consequent negotiations dragged on for some weeks to the postponement of all other State business. The principal cause of dispute was the French island of Malta, which was then being besieged by a British force. (In point of fact the island was about to surrender, though this was unknown to any of the parties at the conference.) Castlereagh hoped to have stated his case for the Catholics and left for Dublin before the middle of the month, and he found the delay almost intolerable. 'I am really grieved,' he wrote to Emily, 'and determined never to come alone again.'²

¹ Ministers should be divided into three classes, receiving respectively £50, £65 and £80 per annum.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 25 : Londonderry MSS.

Pitt and Auckland each tried to allay his impatience by inviting him down to their country seats at Holwood and Eden Farm, but even the Prime Minister's port gave him little comfort in his present frame of mind. It was not till the 23rd that he received the expected summons to Whitehall, and there he had to wait another week before being called in to the Cabinet discussions. On the first day he paced Portland's office from noon till five o'clock in the afternoon 'waiting in anxious expectation of being liberated from my attendance here.'¹ He had actually packed his trunks. 'The Cabinet were employed the whole day on other business,' he wrote to his wife next evening. 'I was appointed again to-day, and after three hours in patience was put off again till to-morrow. I really am excessively out of sorts and don't know how to help myself. . . . You know I will not waste an hour. Pray tell Lord Cornwallis this.'² On the following day he was once more put off. Portland at the same time sent the Lord-Lieutenant a note of apology for detaining his Secretary so long; his excuse was that 'our time has been so much occupied of late *by the most important of all possible subjects*.'³

At length on the last day of September the Cabinet turned to Irish affairs. In addition to the Chief Secretary, eight ministers were present at the meeting.⁴ Only two others besides Portland had seen the memoranda which Castlereagh had drawn up, so that the papers were now placed on the table for the inspection of the Board. Pitt opened the discussion with a brief statement of the need for reform in the spheres indicated, and some loose and desultory argument followed. Then Loughborough, the Lord Chancellor, suddenly delivered a violent harangue against all concessions to the Catholics except on the tithe issue. Castlereagh was greatly taken aback by such unexpected opposition. His astonishment was increased by the fact that Loughborough's arguments, which were by no means new, were not combated with any warmth but on the part of Grenville. Dundas, the minister most capable of answering the Chancellor, was unfor-

¹ Castlereagh to his wife, Sept. 23 : Londonderry MSS. ² *Id.* Sept. 24.

³ Portland to Cornwallis, Sept. 25 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 293.

⁴ Pitt, Portland, Grenville, Loughborough, Chatham, Spencer, Windham, and Camden. The absentees were Liverpool, Dundas, Westmoreland, and Cornwallis.

tunately absent on this occasion. Pitt, who was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, was evidently much affected, though he said little. He immediately feared that the wily Scots lawyer had played him false, and his suspicions were not unfounded. In the hopes of overcoming the objections which had been advanced, he therefore adjourned the discussion for three months, and the Cabinet dispersed without having come to any decision on the main issue. Loughborough, however, endeavoured to disarm suspicion by undertaking to prepare a Tithe Bill.¹

The Chief Secretary was accordingly instructed to inform the Lord-Lieutenant that, while proposals for tithe commutation and clerical endowment had been favourably received, no definite assurance could be given on the political question without further deliberation. Though naturally disappointed at the turn events had now taken, Castlereagh still did not feel himself justified, from anything that had passed at the Cabinet meeting, to disappoint Cornwallis, even should the majority of the ministers agree with the Chancellor's opinions.² But the veteran in the Viceregal Lodge was more dubious when he heard the news, and he took the delay to be a bad omen. Cornwallis had previously anticipated some opposition at Downing Street to his plans for the Catholics. He now began to fear that the more liberally-minded ministers might not be able to overcome it. 'I cannot help entertaining considerable apprehensions that our Cabinet will not have the firmness to adopt such measures as will render the Union an efficient advantage to the Empire,' he reflected with some wisdom. 'Those things which, if now liberally granted, might make the Irish a loyal people, will be of little avail when they are extorted on a future day.'³

Champion of the Church Establishment was a strange rôle for an erstwhile Presbyterian to fill, a Dissenter who was known to have once expressed the latitudinarian sentiment, 'that political rights should not depend upon religious creed.'⁴ Still his views were now those of the highest law authority in the realm, and they naturally carried great weight irrespective of his religious meta-

¹ Stanhope, iii. 268-271. Campbell, *Lives of the Chancellors*, vi. 324. Rose Correspondence, i. 302.

² Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 1, 1800 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 294.

³ Cornwallis to Ross, Oct. 8, 1800 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 294.

⁴ Campbell, vi. 311.

morphosis. Loughborough's life had in truth been one long succession of trimmings, of which this *coup* was the climax ; but if he had frequently compromised himself in the past his reputation and not his career had suffered.¹ As Alexander Wedderburn he had commenced his parliamentary activities by abusing Lord North's ministry, and a year later he had entered it as Solicitor-General. Throughout the American War he continued to sit on the Treasury Bench, and for his defence of official blunders during that period he received a peerage and a chief justiceship. When North retired ignominiously he carried on a flirtation with Carlton House, and this phase lasted till Thurlow's precipitate fall in 1793 induced Pitt to give him the Great Seal ; thereupon he reverted to his old place among the 'King's Friends.' The Fitzwilliam episode two years later had afforded further proof of his duplicity ; for while supporting in the council the conciliatory policy adopted by that viceroy, he was secretly poisoning the King's mind against it. In fact he advised George that Catholic emancipation tended to subvert the Church Establishment, and hence by assenting to it he would violate his Coronation Oath. The result was that the King informed Pitt of his conviction that there must be no further concessions to the Catholics. In 1800 it appeared that the Chancellor had again repeated his warning, and furthermore that it was exercising a most disturbing effect upon the royal conscience, of which he was the official keeper.

Loughborough had been staying at Weymouth during the summer. On the King's arrival in September he discovered that the air and sea-bathing had agreed with him so well as to justify him in prolonging his visit. Thenceforward he was frequently observed in royal company. On September 25 Pitt wrote summoning him to attend a Cabinet in the following week for the purpose of discussing Irish affairs. He mentioned the three main heads of discussion in his letter, adding that 'Lord Castlereagh has drawn up several papers on this subject which are at present in Lord Grenville's possession and which you will probably receive from him by the post.'² According to Loughborough's account, this letter and the box containing the papers

¹ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* lx. 132. Campbell, vi. *passim*.

² Pitt to Loughborough, Sept. 25 : Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, iii. 268 (ed. 1862).

were delivered to him by the same messenger and in full view of the King. His Majesty's curiosity was naturally aroused, and Loughborough foolishly showed him Pitt's confidential letter. The Chancellor subsequently defended himself for this conduct by saying that it was impossible for him not to have informed the King of the reason of his sudden departure, 'and I thought the best way was to show him the letter in which there was nothing to be kept back.'¹ He did, however, succeed in keeping Castlereagh's papers from the King, and he did not even open them till he was safely on the road to town, though George of course must have known of their existence from reading the letter.

His Majesty now fell into a great state of mental agitation and became enraged with Pitt and his other ministers (the virtuous Chancellor excepted) for contemplating such far-reaching reforms in the State without having first consulted him. But Pitt had in no wise departed from constitutional usage, and he was quite justified in declining to submit any political plan to the Sovereign till it had been previously debated and matured in the Cabinet. Loughborough in thus disclosing the contents of the Prime Minister's letter had been guilty of a flagrant breach of confidence. At the same time in working upon the King's fears by representing with the aid of the Archbishop of Canterbury that 'the Church was in danger' he had acted most treacherously towards his colleagues. At the moment these proceedings were unknown to any other members of the Government except Auckland, who being outside the Cabinet (he was Postmaster-General) seems to have viewed a possible split in the ranks as the most likely means of entering it. As Pitt now retired to the country for some weeks in the hopes of building up his health, the Chancellor was able to continue his intrigues for a while longer undeterred.

Three days after the momentous Cabinet meeting on September 30 Castlereagh set out again for Ireland. Lady Londonderry, grief-stricken, travelled with him in the coach, for they had just withdrawn from Alec's bedside. The boy had been 'very low' all week, and he was now reported to be sinking fast. Only his father could remain behind and bear the final scene.

Before starting Castlereagh had a conversation with the Prime

¹ Rosslyn MSS. Loughborough's account has been printed from these MSS. in Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, vi. 322-326.

Minister on the subject of his office of Keeper of the Signet. Pitt's object in broaching it was to provide for Pelham, who was in apparent need and, in spite of his periodic absences from Ireland when Chief Secretary, had undeniable claims on official patronage. Camden had already warned him what to expect when he met the Prime Minister, adding, however, that 'he feels he can talk to you upon its relinquishment in no other view than by making your present office as permanent as his Administration.'¹ Castlereagh replied by immediately placing the Signet at Pitt's disposal. 'You know my feeling has always been that I only retained that office from a consideration that my situation of Chief Secretary was altogether personal to the Lord-Lieutenant for the time being,' he explained to his uncle. 'Under any other view of the question I should have long since pressed that the Privy Seal should be made auxiliary to the arrangements of Government, as I feel that pluralities do not become a young politician and am perfectly satisfied with the income of my other office; though hitherto the expenses of the situation have disposed both of that and what I derive from Lord Londonderry.'² In the end it was decided to let the question stand over till the opening of the United Parliament.

At each stage on the return journey Castlereagh despatched comforting notes to his wife informing her of his progress. Here is one of them :³

'CHESTER, 7th [October], Monday.

'MY DEAREST EMILY,

'I hope this will not reach you many hours before me; but it will go to point as nearly as I can when you may expect us. We shall sleep to-morrow night at Conway and embark on Wednesday night if the wind answers. Pray send Joss to the Pidgeon House with the carriage.

'We have travel'd slowly as my mother required some care: she is better on the whole than I could have hoped for.

'I have not heard of you for an age, but trust that I shall find a few lines at Holyhead. I hear two packets sail'd to-day from Parkgate,

¹ Camden to Castlereagh, Sept. 26: *Cast. Corr.* iii. 386.

² Castlereagh to Camden, Sept. 27: *Cast. Corr.* iii. 387. Castlereagh received an allowance from his father of £4,000 a year: *Accounts' Journal MS.* 1791-1803 (Londonderry Estate Office). As Chief Secretary he received annually £4,500 and as Keeper of the Privy Seal £1,500. *Memorandum of Salaries: Londonderry MSS.*

³ Londonderry MSS.

notwithstanding our adventures off Ormshead. I wish I was on board, as the wind is quite fair and my patience on the decline.

‘ God bless you, dearest Emily.

C.’

When he reached Holyhead and got on board the Irish packet with his party, he met with an experience only too common for cross-Channel passengers in the days before the invention of steam. The two following letters to Emily explain the situation.

‘ HOLYHEAD [10th October].

‘ We sailed yesterday morning at six o’clock with an adverse wind ; at the end of 20 hours we had advanced but 7 leagues, and then found the wind freshening and directly in our teeth. We were all sick, but my mother so severely as to make us apprehensive that her strength was unequal to bear the suffering for 48 hours longer, which seemed the then probable duration of the passage. Under these circumstances Capt. Furnace advised our return, and much as I should have wished to persevere, I could not urge it in the state my mother was. She has been in bed since we landed this morning at 6 o’clock, and will not be able to attempt it again before to-morrow morning. . . .’

‘ HOLYHEAD, Sunday [13th October].

‘ This is the 5th day of our captivity and as yet I have but imperfect prospects of being released. . . .

‘ There is a circulating library here consisting of 4 books, three of which are now in our possession. The exterior is such as to make gloves a very salutary precaution. I left London with an oppression on my breast which has been nearly removed by reading *The Gamester*, *The Wonder*, *The Fair Penitent*, and *The Conscious Lovers*. We could find nothing else that was tolerable.’

At length after eight days’ captivity (‘ no small penance ’) the wind changed, and they landed in Dublin Bay exhausted in body and spirits. The Chief Secretary found affairs as satisfactory as could be expected on his arrival. On the whole the country was quiet, but there had been a bad harvest and it was thought that the demand for provisions would cause famine prices.¹ ‘ I am happy to tell you,’ he wrote to Whitehall, ‘ that the late rains have relieved our apprehensions very much as to subsistence, but still the precaution of stopping the distilleries must be persevered in.’² By thus restricting the supply of grain to the distilleries, he forestalled any appreciable bread scarcity. His father had already

¹ Castlereagh to Beresford, Oct. 17 : *Beres. Corr.* ii. 251.

² Castlereagh to King, Oct. 21 : H.O. Ireland, 94.

given an excellent lead to landlords by importing large quantities of foodstuffs for the benefit of his tenants.¹ Only in Limerick was there any signs of popular disturbance. The Catholics throughout the country were in that blissful state of patient expectancy which English politicians frequently encouraged them to cultivate. Cornwallis received the news of the Cabinet's indecision and the royal qualms of conscience with certain inward misgivings. However, he affected a bold front, and openly expressed his determination to send Castlereagh back to England, as soon as a decent interval should have elapsed, 'to try to persuade the Ministers to adopt manfully the only measure which can ever make the mass of the people in Ireland good subjects.'²

A week or two later Castlereagh escorted his step-mother back to Mount Stewart. On their arrival they received the sad news of Alec's death.³ Whilst waiting for the funeral in Newtownards he again turned over the main features of the religious controversy in his mind and interviewed the leading Presbyterian divines in the north. At the same time he was able to put the son of one of them in the way of some official preferment. 'I cannot restrain the expression however feeble of your Lordship's goodness,' replied the father. 'My son is delighted with the prospects which are opened to him through your Lordship's favour. I trust he will be sensible of its value, and endeavour to deserve it by a correct and proper conduct.'⁴

It appeared likely that the outstanding Cabinet business would be postponed till after New Year's Day, since Pitt's health was clearly unequal to the strain of its further consideration. The Prime Minister was now in rural seclusion enjoying Speaker Addington's hospitality, but he was said to be so weak that he could no longer raise the port to his lips.⁵ Meanwhile Lough-

¹ See above, p. 32 ² Cornwallis to Ross, Oct. 24 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 296.

³ Alexander John Stewart. Born February 23, 1783. Died November 14, 1800, at Brompton. Buried in Newtownards : Estate Office MSS. *Gentleman's Magazine*, lxx. 1215 (Dec. 1800).

⁴ Robert Black to Castlereagh, Dec. 30 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 423. Dr. Black was the Synod's agent for the Regium Donum, and he worked hard with Castlereagh to obtain an increase in the bounty. Owing to his position and to Castlereagh's friendship he subsequently achieved considerable power in Ireland, being known as 'the unmitred bishop.' Ultimately, however, he quarrelled with the Synod, and disappointed at his loss of prestige he committed suicide by throwing himself into the river Foyle from Derry Bridge : *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, v. 113.

⁵ McTier to Drennan, Nov. 11 : Drennan Letters, 883 (unpublished).

borough, who imagined himself as First Lord of the Treasury, was profiting by this indisposition to consolidate the work which he had commenced so effectively at Weymouth. He secretly composed an elaborate paper which purported to be an answer to all Castlereagh's arguments, and put it into the King's hands early in December.¹ 'The exclusion of Papists from Parliament and office,' he wrote, 'was coeval with the Reformation'; and to this ingenious counsel His Majesty attended and hardened his heart. His aim, as Cooke observed to his Chief on reading the paper, was 'to close the question for ever.'² About the same time the principal Catholic prelates met in Dublin to express their gratitude for any favours which His Majesty's Government should see fit to bestow upon them and their flock. The laity continued to put their trust in Cornwallis, conceiving (as the latter felt with certain mental uneasiness) that the object of his remaining in his official situation after the completion of the Union was to carry Emancipation for them. Opposition from the Woolsack the Lord-Lieutenant indeed regarded as futile. 'Whatever Lord Loughborough's opinion may be of the practicability of concession,' he told his Secretary, 'he will in a short time, or I am much mistaken, find it still more impracticable to resist.'³ Opposition from Windsor he regarded in a more dangerous light, though he believed that it could be overcome if Pitt and the rest of the Cabinet showed a united front. On his own side Cornwallis was determined to stick to his post to the last, though doubtless he already knew that by the fault of his superiors the trap was closing round him just as it had done nineteen years before on the plains of North America. This was his ultimatum: 'I cannot in conscience and in duty to my country abandon the Catholic question, without which all we have done will be of no avail.'⁴

Castlereagh hastened back to Dublin at the beginning of December, and spent a much-needed fortnight at the Castle clearing up arrears of routine work. His office was besieged by needy applicants, most of whom he turned over to Cooke and Marsden. Members of the Parliamentary Bar and the Crown

¹ H.O. Ireland, 99. The text has been printed in Pellew, *Life of Sidmouth*, i. Appendix.

² Cooke to Castlereagh, Jan. 9, 1801 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 17.

³ Cornwallis to Castlereagh, Dec. 29, 1800 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 416.

⁴ Cornwallis to Ross, Dec. 18 : *Corn. Corr.* ii. 313.

lawyers were shouting for compensation, and they had to be pacified. He discussed Revenue arrangements with Beresford, and endeavoured to patch up an ugly quarrel which had broken out between the Lord-Lieutenant and the Chancellor over an attachment case in the Court of King's Bench.¹ He looked in on the Board of Inland Navigation, which having been constituted by Act of Parliament was preparing to take over his old house in Merrion Street for offices. He had procured the appointment of Sackville Hamilton, a trustworthy retired civil servant, as Chairman of the Directors; William Gregory, a young member of Parliament, who was Lord Clancarty's son-in-law, was Secretary. 'This will ensure us an honest Board,' reflected Castlereagh, 'and give the measure every advantage.'² He had himself promoted the enactment which created this Board and provided for an annual subsidy from the State to assist in the prosecution of its work. This was Castlereagh's 'Shannon scheme,' and as such must be considered as the forefather of the modern venture. 'The main object,' he explained to the English authorities, 'is to render the Shannon navigable from its source at Lough Allen to Limerick and of course to the sea, a distance of about 170 miles which can be accomplished for little more than £100,000. The next object is to complete the navigation from Dublin to the Shannon, which is already better than three-fourths advanced. This with an improvement in the harbour of Dublin composes the scope of our present purpose. . . . Were these improvements to await the speculation of individuals acting entirely on private capital, much time must elapse before the wealth of the country would take this direction.'³

4

Towards the middle of December the expected summons to London arrived at the Chief Secretary's office. The Act of Union

¹ Cooke to Castlereagh, Nov. 18 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 397.

² Castlereagh to Cooke, July 12 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 278. Sackville Hamilton was also Commissioner for Compensation. He had previously been Civil Under-Secretary. See above, p. 325, note 2. William Gregory was later Civil Under-Secretary (1812-1831). A selection from his correspondence has been published by the late Lady Gregory : *Mr. Gregory's Letter Box* (London, 1898).

³ Castlereagh to King, June 28 : H.O. Ireland, 94..

was due to come into operation on the 1st of January, 1801, when, as Castlereagh put it, 'things are to flow in somewhat a new channel.'¹ There were some formal details to be arranged before that date at headquarters, and the Secretary was desired to give his opinion upon them in person. 'There are besides, as you well know,' wrote Portland in the letter of summons, 'some very great and important matters which must be unavoidably decided before the meeting of Parliament takes place.' In requesting Castlereagh to be in town immediately after Christmas the English minister added significantly : 'I am too much used to your punctuality to apprehend a disappointment.'²

The Chief Secretary left Dublin with his wife on the 17th. For once the wind was favourable ; they were in Holyhead in less than twelve hours, and reached town the third day from Chester.³ The Camdens had invited them to spend Christmas in Kent, and they lost no time in posting down to the Wildernessee. Here Castlereagh learned from his uncle of the latest developments in the political situation. Loughborough's poisoned arrows had apparently found their mark in the conscience of more than one minister ; even Portland was rumoured to have gone over to the King's side on the Catholic question. He returned to town on the 28th, and on the following day called at Whitehall, where he received a rude surprise.⁴ The Home Secretary's attitude to the Catholic claims had been changed by Loughborough's arguments from tolerant indifference to incipient opposition. He now informed Castlereagh of the conscientious scruples which had lately arisen in his mind ; and hoping to soften the blow which he knew that this information must be for his visitor, and possibly also to convert him to his own way of thinking, he presented him with a copy of the Chancellor's paper now in circulation amongst the Cabinet. Castlereagh was dumbfounded at this sudden change of front. He realised that everything now depended upon Pitt and his influence with his colleagues and the King ; and so he lost no time in representing at Downing Street the disappointment which Cornwallis and himself would feel should the

¹ Castlereagh to Beresford, Oct. 17 : *Beres. Corr.* ii. 251.

² Portland to Castlereagh, Dec. 12 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 414.

³ Castlereagh to Cooke, Dec. 29 : *Cast. Corr.* iii. 416.

⁴ Castlereagh to Portland, Dec. 28 : *H.O. Ireland*, 94.

views stated in the obnoxious paper be acquiesced in by the Cabinet.¹

In dating his letter to the Prime Minister 'January 1, 1801,' Castlereagh chose an appropriate day to remind him of his obligations on the score of Catholic emancipation. 'When I left Lord Cornwallis,' he wrote, 'he certainly was prepared for some difference of opinion in the Cabinet on the principle of the measure itself, and for much caution on the part of his Majesty's Ministers in general with respect to the period when they might think themselves justified in prudence in proposing to Parliament so important an alteration of the Test Laws; but he did not apprehend, from anything that had hitherto passed on the subject, that their sentiments were adverse to the principle of the measure connected with the Union, much less that they were prepared to oppose the question on its merits and to declare their determination to resist hereafter any further concession to the Catholics.' For the benefit of Pitt's memory the writer went on to recapitulate at some length the history of official transactions on the subject during the previous twelve months. He particularly emphasised the indispensable nature of the assistance which the Catholics had rendered in promoting the Union and the consequences of their possible disappointment. 'You will easily conceive,' he concluded, 'that, in addition to the public regret his Excellency will experience at the abandonment of a measure which he considers to be essential to the future interests of the Empire, he will feel a peculiar degree of pain on finding himself placed in those awkward circumstances with respect to the Catholics, to which he saw the transaction in itself was so likely to lead and which he took every possible precaution to avoid. You know Lord Cornwallis is the last person in the world who would wish to consider what has passed on the part of the Cabinet as a pledge given to him, though not to the Catholics. You know his feelings are with respect to the disposal of this question altogether public.'²

Castlereagh's letter acted as a nervous tonic to the Prime Minister, who was still broken in health and distracted by a variety of worries, private as well as public. A few days later he arrived in Downing Street and held a Cabinet, at which

¹ Castlereagh to Pitt, Jan. 1, 1801: *Cast. Corr.* iv. 8.

² For further extracts from this letter see above, pp. 332-334.

he expressed his unalterable determination to proceed with a measure of Catholic relief ; he even inserted a phrase in his draft of the King's Speech plainly hinting at the favour to come. The majority of the members agreed with him. The Prime Minister was confident that come what might inside the Cabinet he could count on the support of Grenville, Dundas, Camden, Spencer, Cornwallis and Windham, and he knew that outside it he could command that of Castlereagh, Rose and Canning. But he now noticed with some concern that his own brother Chatham and his friend Auckland, as well as Portland, Westmoreland and Liverpool were following slowly in the wake of the recalcitrant Chancellor. He immediately set Dundas to write a conciliatory and well-reasoned letter to Loughborough, and hoped that something would come of a communication from a fellow-Scot and lawyer.¹ Castlereagh, who had been called in to the Cabinet consultations, wrote encouragingly to Dublin, and Cornwallis answered with the opinion that ' if Mr. Pitt is firm he will meet with no difficulty.'² The Lord-Lieutenant now became almost jubilant. ' We now shall turn that great measure of Union to real profit,' he wrote, ' at the same time that we are adopting the only means of resisting the hostility of all Europe.'³

But while Cornwallis was writing in a tone of renewed hope from Dublin Castle, the King was gradually learning of the Cabinet's liberal intentions from isolated conversations with different ministers. The monarch was suddenly convinced that he had been tricked. Unable to control his rage any longer, he burst out at a levée on the 28th with the loud declaration that he considered all supporters of Catholic emancipation as ' personally indisposed ' to him. Not content with this public manifestation of his displeasure he went up to Dundas, whom he saw in the audience, and pointing to Castlereagh who was also present, he exclaimed :

' What is this that this young Lord has brought over and which they are going to throw at my head ? . . . I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure. The most Jacobinical thing I ever of.'

¹ Dundas to Loughborough, Jan. 12 : Campbell, vi. 336.

² Cornwallis to Castlereagh, Jan. 14 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 20.

³ Cornwallis to Castlereagh, Jan. 22 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 21.

'You'll find,' replied Dundas with his usual tact, 'among those who are friendly to that measure some you never supposed your enemies.'¹

The sensation which this scene produced among the ministers can be imagined. Speaker Addington was immediately despatched to Downing Street as a royal emissary to emphasise the danger of proceeding further with the measure. George's Coronation Oath bound him to support the Established Church, and he felt that all his servants ought to be in entire communion with that body. A short and angry correspondence followed between the Prime Minister and the monarch whom he had served with extraordinary fidelity for almost twenty years. A few days later Pitt sent in his resignation, which was immediately accepted.² At the King's express request, however, he consented to remain in office till the arrangements for a new administration should be completed. Grenville, Dundas, Spencer, Windham and Camden immediately resigned from the Cabinet and their offices with their leader.³ An express messenger was despatched to Dublin to acquaint the Lord-Lieutenant with what had occurred, and he was expected to follow suit with his Secretary.

Pitt, sensing the danger of an Opposition government at such a crisis, now informed Addington, whom the King had sent for to take his place, that he would use his influence with his personal followers to persuade as many as possible to retain their offices. At the same time he instructed Castlereagh to write a tactful letter to Cornwallis, in the hopes of enabling the Lord-Lieutenant to break the news of the fall of the ministry and its consequences more easily to the Catholics. Castlereagh carried out these instructions in a carefully-worded despatch. He pointed out that at present any Emancipation Bill would be thrown out by the Lords, and that even if it were forced through the Upper House it would be deprived of all its benefits, and in any case the King

¹ Wilberforce, *Life of William Wilberforce*, iii. 7.

² February 5. On this and subsequent negotiations see particularly the *Rose Correspondence* and *Glenbervie Diaries*, *passim*.

³ Grenville was Foreign Secretary; Dundas, Secretary for War and Colonies and President of the Board of Control; Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty; Windham, Secretary at War; and Camden, Minister without portfolio. A number of Pitt's personal friends who occupied subordinate posts in his Ministry resigned at the same time. These included George Canning (Foreign Under-Secretary) and George Rose (Secretary to the Treasury).

would refuse his assent. He explained Pitt's sentiments in a celebrated passage, which was to form the basis of the Government ultimatum to the Catholics.

'... It is his wish that your Excellency without bringing forward the King's name should make the Catholics feel that an obstacle, which the King's Ministers could not surmount, precluded them from bringing forward the measure whilst in office ; that their attachment to the question was such that they felt it impossible to continue in administration under the impossibility of proposing it with the necessary concurrence, and that they retired from the King's service considering this line of conduct as most likely to contribute to the ultimate success of the measure ; to represent to them how much their future hopes must depend upon strengthening their cause by good conduct ; in the meantime that they ought to weigh their prospects as arising from the persons who now espouse their interests and compare them with those which they could look to from any other quarter ; that they may naturally rely on the zealous support of all those who now retire and of many that remain, when it can be given with any prospect of success ; in the meantime that Mr. Pitt would do his utmost to establish their cause in the public favour and thus prepare the way for its ultimate success ; but that they must distinctly understand that he would not concur in a hopeless attempt at this moment to force it ; and that he must at all times repress, with the same decision as if he held an adverse opinion, any unconstitutional conduct in the Catholic body.'

As for a possible ' change of sentiments on the part of the King,' Castlereagh stated that such a prospect ' seems too hopeless to be held out in fairness to the Catholics as any solid ground of hope, and his death is that solution of the difficulty which all parties must equally deprecate.'

It was indeed cold comfort to the Catholics to know that, their hopes having been thus rudely dashed, they would better serve their interests by waiting till a more propitious moment (if ever) in which the royal conscience might be approached, than by indulging their disappointment in more acute and desperate fashion. ' Such are the principles which we must preach,' added Castlereagh in the private part of his letter ; ' I wish it were reasonable to expect that they would be implicitly acted upon.'¹

Meanwhile in Ireland there was the same strange calm and indifference which had prevailed since the passing of the Act of Union. New Year's Day, on which the Act officially came into force, went by without untoward incident. The guns were fired

¹ Castlereagh to Cornwallis, Feb. 9 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 39.

and the new flag was hoisted. As the Lord-Lieutenant drove from the Park to attend a Privy Council he passed through the crowds in the streets and Upper Castle Yard, and 'did not hear a single expression of ill humour or disapprobation.'¹ The Union Jack, which bore the Cross of St. Patrick superadded to those of Saint George and Saint Andrew, fluttered gaily from the Castle walls, and with this patriotic spectacle 'the mob were delighted.'² Indeed it was not difficult to excite delight or any other passion in the hearts of the Dublin mob; for a few weeks later Cooke reported that the more uproarious element was singing between the acts in the theatre :

' A high gallows and a windy day
For Billy Pitt and Castlereagh ! ' ³

Cornwallis, as has been seen, considered that the unusual quiet of the country was due to the Catholics, who considered him as having been continued in office by Pitt for the express purpose of completing their political emancipation. There was only one course for an honourable man in his position to take on opening his despatches in the dark days of February, and the Lord-Lieutenant took it. In view of Pitt's resignation his own was a foregone conclusion; ⁴ it automatically carried that of his Chief Secretary with it. 'It is too mortifying a reflection,' he wrote after he had discharged this unpleasant duty, '—when all difficulties were surmounted, when Protestants and Catholics, Unionists and anti-Unionists, all joined in esteem and confidence towards the Government, and were softened into an acquiescence of surrendering their animosities and prejudices as a sacrifice to the public safety—that the fatal blow should be struck from the quarter most interested to avert it, and that Ireland is again to become a millstone about the neck of Britain and to be plunged into all its former horrors and miseries.'⁵ Nothing short of consternation reigned in the Castle. Even Cooke, though he personally disliked the Lord-Lieutenant and disagreed with him on many points of policy, was distressed on his account, and he

¹ Cornwallis to Castlereagh, Jan. 2 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 13.

² Cooke to Castlereagh, Jan. 2 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 14.

³ Cooke to Castlereagh, Jan. 29 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 24.

⁴ Cornwallis also had a seat in the Cabinet and was Master-General of the Ordnance, both of which he immediately resigned.

⁵ Cornwallis to Ross, Feb. 26 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 341.

lamented the inevitable struggle which he saw must follow the abandonment of a concession calculated to 'attach three millions of subjects, make them friends to the Constitution, and make the Irish frontier an impregnable barrier to Great Britain instead of being the perpetual object of alarm, terror and danger.'¹ The triumph of dark Irish destiny had revealed a new century, which was to be one of lost opportunities and an ever-restless chafing beneath an alien yoke, instead of, as Castlereagh fervently hoped, an age of increasing happiness and prosperity for a United Kingdom.

If one may judge from a paper on Pitt's conduct which he wrote at this time, Castlereagh experienced a slight feeling of disappointment that the Prime Minister had not shown more perseverance in his dealings with the King. Pitt's motives, of course, he rated at the highest valuation: 'if his course is to urge the question in argument keeping open the decision till a more favourable moment, and if he has felt it incumbent on him, under the impossibility of bringing that measure forward as a Minister, to retire at so very critical a moment from the King's service, I think the most suspicious Catholic will hardly suspect him of betraying his cause for that situation which he has resigned rather than abandon it.'² Still, George had been known to give way before in matters to which he entertained the most violent objections, notably the recognition of American Independence; and there is no reason to suppose that if Pitt had been in good health and determined to carry the Catholic question in the face of all opposition, the King must have eventually submitted. But the gout-stricken and enervated Pitt was quite unequal to a prolonged struggle with a monarch who, as it turned out, was now on the verge of insanity.

One day shortly after he had accepted his minister's resignation, the King went to church, where he remained a long while, in a sense no doubt of conscientious obligation. It was snowing hard and the day was intensely cold. The result of this physical mortification was that George caught a severe chill. Towards the end of the month he threw himself into his physician's arms in an agony of weeping, which lasted for a quarter of an hour, and agreed that he must be very ill. After several fits of delirious

¹ Cooke to Clare, Feb. 10 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 44.

² 'Memorandum on Mr. Pitt's Retirement from Office': London-derry MSS.; *Cast. Corr.* iv. 38.

violence he rallied sharply, and sent a message to Pitt to the effect that he was the immediate cause of the royal affliction. Such pressure transgressed the bounds even of sick-room licence, and Pitt in his reply had no alternative but to complete the unfortunate surrender of ideals which his resignation had commenced. He now promised the King that he would not agitate the Catholic question again during the reign, adding that he was ready to resume office, should Addington resign, on condition of not introducing the measure or permitting it to pass.¹ 'Now my mind will be at ease,' George is said to have exclaimed on receiving this intimation. A course of bark and port wine accelerated his recovery, and the convalescent period was enlivened by games of picquet and backgammon and an appropriate gift from the Irish Chancellor of a complete set of the Irish Parliamentary Debates.² Castlereagh and Cornwallis bowed to the inevitable, realising that the disputed question must now sleep, as 'any person who should attempt to bring it forward would be accused of wishing either to kill or distract the King.'³ But the allegiance of a people had been lost at the price of a pacific royal conscience.

5

The new Prime Minister was now busily engaged in constructing his government. Henry Addington was the son of a country physician who had prescribed port to Pitt in his youth, and Pitt, not unmindful of this and other services, had given him his friendship and helped him to the Speaker's Chair.⁴ His very mediocrity appealed to the King, just as his good humour made him popular with the squirearchy. He enjoyed the unique distinction of being called to the chief power in the State without ever having occupied subordinate political office (not even an Under-Secretaryship or a Lordship of the Treasury), and from this greatness which was so suddenly thrust upon him he never recovered. The rest of his administration presented like its head a curious mixture of anti-Catholicism and mediocrity. The leading ministers of the old

¹ Stanhope, iii. 303-306. J. H. Rose, *Pitt and the Great War*, 447-448. *Rose Corr.* i. 360. *Glenbervie Diaries*, i. 185 (ed. Bickley).

² This collection is now preserved in the King's Library at the British Museum.

³ Cornwallis to Lichfield, March 12 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 350.

⁴ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* i. 117. Pellew, *Life of Sidmouth*, *passim*.

government who had sided with the King against Pitt, with one exception retained their old offices, and some nondescripts were brought in to replace the departed.¹ The exception was Loughborough, whom Addington considered as too treacherous a colleague, and he was summarily dismissed from the Woolsack.² With the exception of himself, all the members of the Cabinet were either peers or heirs to peerages, so impressed was Addington with aristocratic influence. It was an odd collection of unprepossessing talents to form a government—Addington, Portland, Chatham, Westmoreland, Liverpool, Hawkesbury, Hobart, St. Vincent, Lewisham, and Eldon. Canning jocularly described it as ‘meaning very little nor meaning that little well,’³ and yet with the addition of Pelham, who was created a peer for the purpose, it was to succeed in adding to British laurels abroad and concluding a not unworthy peace with France. But from the nature of things it could do little good in Ireland; and before its disintegration three years later in the face of renewed war clouds and the emaciated figure of Pitt, another rising had been attempted in that unhappy country.

Addington lost no time in nominating official successors in Dublin Castle. Lord Hardwicke was the new Lord-Lieutenant, and his Chief Secretary was Charles Abbot. They had little in common with the Prime Minister, except that they were all forty-three years of age, and none of them had any profound knowledge of or interest in Irish affairs. Hardwicke, who came of a well-known legal family, had been in Parliament for twenty years, but he had made no mark at St. Stephen’s; he was chiefly distin-

¹ Portland (Home Secretary), Chatham (Lord President), Westmoreland (Privy Seal) and Liverpool (Duchy of Lancaster) continued in their offices and the Cabinet. Outside the Cabinet Auckland (Postmaster-General) and Dudley Ryder (Treasurer of the Navy) remained. The newcomers to the Cabinet were Eldon (Lord Chancellor), Hawkesbury (Foreign Secretary), Hobart (War and Colonies), St. Vincent (Admiralty) and Lewisham (Board of Control). The minor reinforcements included Nicholas Vansittart (Secretary to the Treasury) and Charles Yorke (Secretary at War). In July Pelham entered the Cabinet as Home Secretary, Portland became Lord President, and Chatham went to the Ordnance Office.

² Campbell, vi. 327. Even after he had given up the Great Seal Loughborough continued to attend Cabinet meetings till politely told by the Prime Minister that his presence was no longer required. Pellew, i. 350-2.

³ Brougham, ii. 121.

guished for his good library in St. James's Square and his knowledge of the fattening of sheep, which was said to be as good as that of any man in Cambridgeshire.¹ With his usual tolerance and good nature he accepted a position which he knew from its nature was invidious, simply because no one else would risk his popularity by undertaking it. He was but a lukewarm opponent of Catholic emancipation, and was eventually to become an enthusiastic convert to the lost cause. His Secretary was made in a different mould. When at Oxford Charles Abbot had won a Latin verse prize with a poem on Peter the Great, which had gained him a gold medal from the Russian Empress Catherine, as well as from the Chancellor of the University.² His subsequent career at the Bar and in Parliament had been one of academic rather than practical brilliance, though he had introduced some useful reforms, notably in the sphere of public finance and vital statistics. Unfortunately he was strongly opposed to Catholic emancipation, and thought that Ireland could in time be completely 'Protestantised.' As it turned out he only held the Chief Secretaryship for a little over six months, and his recall from Ireland early in 1802 to fill the Speaker's Chair probably prevented his views clashing with those of Hardwicke on the treatment of the Catholics.

Neither the new Lord-Lieutenant nor his Secretary actually assumed office till the summer, in order to allow Cornwallis time to complete his arrangements for departure and to discharge his last distasteful task of sweetening as much as possible the pill which the Catholics had to swallow. Abbot put this delay to profit by cultivating the acquaintance of Castlereagh, with whom he had several conferences on the subject of his new duties. At one of these meetings Castlereagh learned that his successor had no financial means outside what he expected to receive from his office, so in order to afford him a permanent provision he surrendered the sinecure office of Keeper of the Privy Seal in Ireland which he still held. It will be remembered that Pitt had intended to give this sinecure to Pelham, but Addington, who had made other arrangements for the latter, pressed Castlereagh to retain it.³

¹ G.E.C. *Complete Peerage*, vi. 307.

² *Dict. Nat. Biog.* i. 3. *Colchester Correspondence*, i. Preface.

³ See above, p. 386. *Colchester Correspondence*, i. 261-62.

The Prime Minister even offered it to him for life, but he graciously refused it in accordance with his opinion that 'pluralities do not become a young politician.' It was accordingly given to Abbot, who held it till his death.¹

The first Parliament of the United Kingdom assembled at Westminster on the 22nd of January, 1801.² The Irish complement passed almost unnoticed at first except for the lengthy swearing-in. It had been well chosen, and in the division on the Address only one Irish member went into the Opposition lobby. They attended in almost full strength, though at the outset the House was amused when a writ was moved for an Irish borough on the ground that the sitting members did not choose to be at the expense of travelling to take their seats.³ Castlereagh had not been seen in these surroundings for almost five years, nor did he resume his old place as an embarrassed stranger. In fact, after the ministerial crisis he continued to come down to St. Stephen's in an official capacity; for although he was no longer technically Chief Secretary, he was in charge of Irish business till his designated successor should be ready to take over his administrative duties. Amongst other measures he introduced bills for making the office of Master of the Rolls in Ireland an efficient legal office, increasing the number of field officers in Irish militia regiments, continuing martial law and suspending the Habeas Corpus Act.⁴ From the Opposition benches Sheridan objected to this procedure on the grounds that he was not a responsible minister, and there was therefore no communication from the Crown. Castlereagh easily disposed of this antagonist in debate. 'I contend that it is competent for any member to get up and make any proposition he thinks it his duty to make,' he replied. 'I trust we are not altogether so dependent upon the Crown that we must wait for a communication before we proceed to a legislative act of importance to the country. To admit that notion would be to admit that the Constitution of England is like the Constitution of France where the originating power must be communicated to the legislative.'⁵

¹ On Abbot's death in 1829 it was merged in the office of Chief Secretary by virtue of 57 Geo. III. cap. 62, s. 11.

² *H. of C. Journals*, lvi. 5.

³ *Belfast News-Letter*, Feb. 10.

⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, March 3. *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1008. *Parl. Reg.* xiv. 523.

⁵ *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1012.

The debate on the Martial Law Bill, in which Castlereagh took a leading part, will be described at greater length in the next chapter, since it was the occasion of bringing forward two ridiculous charges against the late Chief Secretary : first, that by conferring a measure of statutory protection upon military courts he aimed at making these arbitrary bodies wholly irresponsible to any civil authority ; and secondly, that he had authorised the use of torture in the suppression of the rebellion.¹ Abbot was astonished at the masterly speech in which he moved for leave to introduce the bill ; and Pitt, who listened to him with equal attention, declared that his noble friend had that night given proof that ‘ there are among us talents of the first rate, together with extensive knowledge of the true interests of this Empire ; and which talents whether in or out of office will always be ready for exertion, as occasion may arise, against the most bitter enemy of human happiness that ever yet appeared in the world—Jacobinism.’² He met the charges brought against him with a ready tongue, and effectually disarmed hostile criticism. Many other Irish members spoke in this debate, but none with the same force and cogency as the late Chief Secretary, though he would be the first to agree with Cornwallis that these members had in general ‘ done themselves much credit and shown that they are not inferior in talents to their brethren with whom they are now united.’³

6

In spite of the brilliant reappearance which he made at Westminster, the strain of the previous months was plainly telling upon Castlereagh. He commenced to look ill and worried ; he became a prey to acute nervous excitement and imaginary fears ; and early in April he found himself no longer able to come down to the House. For weeks he lay in bed with a raging fever, and some of the doctors who were called in actually despaired of his life. Gradually his condition became less critical, he rallied perceptibly and recovered by slow degrees.⁴ Among the many kind

¹ See below, pp. 414-428.

² *Colch. Corr.* i. 257. *Parl. Reg.* xiv. 373.

³ Cornwallis to Castlereagh, March 18 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 80.

⁴ Cornwallis to Ross, April 22, May 7 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 357, 359. Black to Castlereagh, May 30 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 86. Alison, i. 139.

enquiries from his political friends none was more heartening than that of Pitt, who was much distressed and showed his gratitude by giving him increased share of his confidence when he left the sick-room. Complete change and rest from work were prescribed and he was ordered to Harrogate as soon as he should be able to travel. It was past mid-June when he set out for this destination with Emily. They made the journey by easy stages, stopping for a few days amongst other places at Culford, Cornwallis's farm in Suffolk. 'My old master,' as Castlereagh called the late viceroy, was also enjoying a well-earned rest on his small estate, whither he had just arrived from Ireland. Here he hoped to spend his remaining days undisturbed by the outside world. 'I wish he could have returned to his farm after having accomplished all the good he intended,' added his guest.¹

Cornwallis had stuck to his post in Dublin till the end of May ; and by the tactful conduct which he pursued towards the Catholics before his departure he had done much to alleviate their disappointment and simplify the inauguration of his successor's *régime*.² Though he was by no means so lenient in his treatment of rebels as has been represented by nationalist partisans, he was far more popular than Camden as a governor, chiefly by reason of his superior military knowledge and position and the fact that he had effectually overthrown the detested 'cabinet' of viceregal advisers in the Castle.³ When he passed in procession from the Castle to St. Patrick's Cathedral to attend an installation ceremony shortly after the last prorogation of the Irish Parliament, the crowds had cheerfully pointed at his carriage and shouted, 'There he is !' 'That's he !' and often added : 'God bless him.' And indeed, as the occupant admitted, 'these are not unpleasant circumstances to a man who has governed the country above two years by martial law.'⁴ If his Chief Secretary, upon whose judgment he largely relied, shared little of

¹ Castlereagh to Marsden, June 24 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² He circulated two letters among the leading Catholics, explaining the political crisis which had led to the fall of Pitt's ministry and the temporary abandonment of their claims : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 347. One of these papers was a précis of Castlereagh's letter of February 9 : see above, p. 395.

³ See above, pp. 234, 257.

⁴ Cornwallis to Ross, Aug. 16, 1800 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 288.

this popularity, the omission was ill-deserved ; at worst it must be attributed to the younger man's tendency to despise the masses and the aims of their agitators.

Castlereagh now settled down leisurely to his cure at Harrogate. He found that the waters together with an enforced period of physical inactivity completely restored his health. After a month he wrote to Cooke : ' I have been very idle since I came, have forgot politics, and am grown *very fat*.'¹ But even in the pump-room disquieting rumours reached him that the First Consul was preparing to launch another Irish expedition from Brest, his thoughts drifted back to Bantry Bay, and he grew impatient to join his regiment now that he had no longer any official cares to distract him. The Derry Militia had recently lost its commanding officer, the veteran Tom Conolly, whom gout and old age had compelled to retire from public life ; and his place fell to the Lieutenant-Colonel as next in seniority.² But the fact that he was within three days' journey of Belfast, where the regiment was stationed, added to the benefits which he was deriving from the waters, induced him to prolong his stay in Yorkshire for another fortnight. In the meantime he read the papers, sent rifle regulations to his major, and corresponded with Lord Hardwicke on the irritating Union engagements.³ He also interested himself in the case of an Irish private in his brother's regiment who had been sentenced to death for a rape in York, and for whom on account of the extraordinary circumstances he endeavoured to obtain a reprieve.⁴ For a while he was uneasy that the change of administration in Dublin might affect the allowance which he had been able to procure for his old friends the Ladies of Llangollen from the Concordatum fund, but a note from Cooke, whom he had requested to take up the matter, reassured him that their emolument would be continued.⁵ At last he was pronounced well, and he posted north to Portpatrick, and by the middle of

¹ Castlereagh to Cooke, July 29, 1801 : Dublin Castle MSS.

² Portland to Cornwallis, July 15, 1800 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 280. *Belfast News-Letter*, May 13.

³ Cooke to Castlereagh, Aug. 3, 1801 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 94. Castlereagh to Hardwicke, June 29 : Hardwicke MSS. (B.M. Add. 35, 729).

⁴ Castlereagh to Pelham, Aug. 3 : Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 107).

⁵ Cooke to Castlereagh, Aug. 12 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 96.

August he was in barracks again after an absence of nearly four years.

The next few weeks were spent in visiting his Ulster friends and taking part in the usual military manœuvres preparatory to moving into winter quarters. The north was generally quiet, and if many former rebels were still anxiously looking for the French ships, no active measure of arming or disciplining the people could be traced. However, he noticed one feature peculiar to Ulster. 'Singing and dancing parties by night which bring together eighty or one hundred young men have been observed of late to be more frequent,' he informed Abbot, 'and I am told the persons so assembled consider themselves as belonging to the same rebel company. I am persuaded, however, that the tranquillity of the north will remain undisturbed until the enemy shall have established himself not only in force, but in possession of a considerable portion of the country.'¹ On the whole he was justified in congratulating the new Lord-Lieutenant on the happy opening of his rule, though he realised that it was difficult to say how long the present state of affairs would continue. 'The Union has already apparently discharged the public mind of a greater portion of the political mischief which has incessantly disturbed it for the last twenty-five years than its most sanguine friend could have expected,' he wrote. 'The politics of Ireland no longer afford a field for separate speculation and exertion, and there remains in fact but one great question which can hereafter produce any particular fermentation in that part of the United Kingdom. Whatever may be the fate of that question I rejoice to observe that the Catholic Body have shewn no disposition at this moment by pressing their objects to add to our embarrassments in a period of war.'²

At the same time Castlereagh placed his services at the Lord-Lieutenant's disposal in the matter of unfulfilled Union engagements which was now being investigated. 'It has always been too much the Irish practice,' he observed, 'to forget favours conferred by a former government and to begin a new score with every Lord-Lieutenant as if nothing had happened.' He furnished

¹ Castlereagh to Abbot, Sept. 23 : *Colch. Corr.* i. 371.

² Castlereagh to Hardwicke, Aug. 10 : Hardwicke MSS. (B.M. Add. 35, 707).

Hardwicke with 'a more equitable statement of the account in the shape of debtor and creditor between the Crown and its friends,' each claim in the list was carefully examined, and with a few exceptions every one of substance was eventually satisfied.¹

It was not long before Hardwicke had an opportunity of showing his gratitude for this assistance. The unhappy Downshire, who since his disgrace eighteen months before had lived in morose seclusion, a melancholy example of departed pride and political dissipation, suddenly died 'of gout in his stomach.' The offices of Lord-Lieutenant of County Down and Custos Rotulorum had not been filled since his dismissal; and Castlereagh's father, the obvious successor, had hitherto declined to push his claims, not wishing the governorship of the county 'to be an object of competition between the two families.'² Hardwicke was only too glad to secure his appointment to the vacant offices. In conveying the news to Castlereagh the Lord-Lieutenant wrote: 'You are certainly entitled to every attention from the Government of this country in whatever hands it may be placed, and I can assure you that I have great satisfaction in having an opportunity of showing it in the instance of the government of the County of Down to which Lord Londonderry will be immediately appointed.'³ Shortly after this the Lord-Lieutenant was instrumental in appointing to the Precentorship of Armagh 'a gentleman in whose advancement,' Castlereagh said, 'from public as well as private motives I have felt peculiarly interested.' The recipient of this ecclesiastical favour was 'Johnny' Cleland.⁴

A number of strange anecdotes have been related about Castlereagh's activities during this visit to Ireland. One of these attributes to him a fictitious residence in Dundrum, County Dublin, for the purpose of supervising the education of an equally ficti-

¹ The original list of Union engagements, with Hardwicke's comments and notes as to what was done in each case, has been printed from the Hardwicke MSS. by M. MacDonagh in *The Viceroy's Post-Bag*, 42-53.

² Castlereagh to Hardwicke, Sept. 8: Hardwicke MSS. (B.M. Add. 35, 730).

³ Castlereagh to Hardwicke, Sept.: Hardwicke MSS. (B.M. Add. 35, 730).

⁴ Castlereagh to Hardwicke, Nov. 14: Hardwicke MSS. (B.M. Add. 35, 731).

tious son.¹ Similar tales of gallantry and adventures with highway robbers have been invented by the same fertile imagination. Contemporary correspondence leaves no doubt that with the exception of a week or two spent at Mount Stewart, where he was seen 'quite restored to his health,'² Castlereagh did not stir from his regiment during the two months that he was in Ireland. One incident, which has been vouched for by a reliable authority as having occurred about this time, is perhaps worth recording. A respectable business house in the neighbourhood of Belfast had incurred a penalty of upwards of £10,000 owing to the unintentional breach of a revenue law in the West Indies by one of its managers. The existence of this law was not generally known, and both the directors and their employees were ignorant of it. All applications for redress which had been made to the proper quarter in London had failed. Castlereagh heard of the case, and though the firm in question was unknown to him, he made careful enquiries and satisfied himself as to its integrity. The result was that he succeeded in procuring the remission of the fine.³

7

Meanwhile French overtures for peace, which had been intermittently made without success throughout the preceding twelve months, at last produced a satisfactory international understanding in the armistice signed by M. Otto and Lord Hawkesbury on October 1. Great Britain was to surrender all her colonial acquisitions during the war, except Ceylon and Trinidad; Malta was to be restored to the Knights of St. John, and France was to evacuate Egypt. Towards the end of the month Parliament was summoned to approve the preliminary articles of peace, and Castlereagh was consequently obliged to return to Cleveland Square without being able, as he had hoped, to atone for 'being so long absent from my corps by remaining with it during the remainder of the year.'⁴ The late viceroy, Cornwallis, was still

¹ *Observer*, Aug. 18, 1822. Reede, *passim*. Cp. above, p. 3. The story of the residence in Dundrum was repeated by his brother Charles in the preface to the *Castlereagh Correspondence* (i. 74, 76) without good authority, since the editor knew very little of his life at this period.

² J. Paterson to Pelham, Aug. 27: Pelham MSS. (B.M. Add. 33, 107).

³ James Stuart: *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 22, 1822.

⁴ Castlereagh to Hardwicke, Aug. 10: Hardwicke MSS. (B.M. Add. 35, 707).

cultivating his Suffolk farm and having some excellent partridge shooting ; but these rural delights were rudely interrupted by the arrival of a messenger from the Foreign Office, who intimated the King's pleasure that his lordship should proceed forthwith to Amiens, where after conference with the French ministers the definite treaty was to be signed.¹ The bluff old soldier was more used to making war than putting an end to it, but he obediently embarked for France, where he appears to have suffered as many embarrassments as befell him in Ireland. Castlereagh was amused to learn of some of the duties which this unaccustomed rôle forced upon his ' old master ' : he had, for instance, to dine at a table of thirty covers with the ' almost naked ' mistresses of the French delegates, and to hand out the ugliest of them in person because she was in the keeping of Talleyrand, the Foreign Minister. ' The whole conversation during dinner turned upon their intrigues, which they discussed as publicly as we should our engagements for the day, and afterwards the behaviour became so improper it was impossible any modest woman could have stayed in the room.' ²

The debates at Westminster on the draft treaty were, if as animated, much less acrimonious than those which took place in 1783 ; and the preliminary articles passed without a division, though not without considerable discussion. It is remarkable that, on an occasion such as this when Pitt and Fox were at their best, Castlereagh, despite the cumbrous mode of expression which often hampered his speeches, should have been adjudged by those who heard him as having ably held his own with these parliamentary veterans.³ His arguments in favour of peace were clear and convincing. Since he had last surveyed the European situation in his maiden speech at Westminster some six years before, relations between the two countries had materially altered, and his attitude towards the Republic had undergone a similar change. Jacobinism had been defeated and Napoleon's ordered government established in its place.

¹ Cornwallis to Ross, Oct. 16 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 383.

² Jackson to Abbot, Nov. 26 : *Colch. Corr.* i. 389. *Hamwood Papers*, 320.

³ Corry to Abbot, Nov. 4 ; Sheffield to Abbot, Nov. 11 : *Colch. Corr.* i. 376, 381.

'From causes which it was unnecessary to state the confederacy of powers upon the Continent was dissolved, and therefore it became necessary for Great Britain either to carry on the war alone against France or to make peace with that State, if it could be done upon terms consistent with our safety and independence.' ¹

As Great Britain had entered the war primarily in defence of various national interests threatened by the revolutionary principle, it was in the present circumstances obviously not sound policy to continue it. Much as he welcomed the preliminaries of peace, however, he did not think that the settlement would be of long duration, so he threw out a salutary and prophetic warning that in coming to terms it was absolutely essential to consult the security of the Empire and to take proper measures that the nation 'if again driven to extremities,' as he put it, 'might return to the contest duly prepared.' ²

After this speech it was rumoured that Addington would offer Castlereagh a post in his government, but for the moment the self-confident Prime Minister appeared quite satisfied with the team he had originally chosen, and the expected offer was not made. About the same time Grenville, who as Hawkesbury's successor at the Foreign Office felt bound to oppose the peace, endeavoured to persuade Castlereagh to head an Opposition in the House of Commons in concert with himself in the Lords. But Castlereagh indignantly repudiated the suggested sally, and continued to occupy his seat near Pitt on the back government benches. ³ In any case he had to be careful not to take the session strenuously, and so he preferred to pass the winter quietly at Cleveland Square rather than noisily in the lobbies and on the floor of the House. He made several excursions to see his friends in the country, and later on in the New Year he took a lease of young Lord Palmerston's charming suburban villa at East Sheen. ⁴ Cooke came to see him with news of his resignation on account of ill-treatment and misunderstanding in Dublin Castle. Marsden,

¹ *Parl. Hist.* xxxvi. 54.

² *Parl. Reg.* xvi. 98. He developed this idea in an interesting memorandum which he drew up for the Cabinet after the signing of the Peace of Amiens : *Cast. Corr.* v. 29.

³ H. Legge to Abbot, Nov. 10, Dec. 19 : *Colch. Corr.* i. 380, 382.

⁴ Temple Grove. P. Guedalla, *Palmerston*, 44.

who had taken Cooke's place, sent over the luggage which the late Chief Secretary had forgotten, and asked him if anything more could be done for the Catholics at present.¹ Alexander Knox in the intervals of nervous hysteria also kept him posted with the latest news from the Irish capital. 'I hoped when the Parliament was gone that we should have had a quiet residence here,' wrote his old private secretary; 'but it is now so much the reverse that the Lords and Commons now in England seem scarcely to be missed; nor is there any difference, except in our freedom from the roll of carriages at the hour of the House breaking up.'² The conclusion of peace negotiations in the spring put an end to any hopes which were still being entertained in Ireland of a French invasion. A picture was painted of the final scene at Amiens, evidently by a local artist, and Castlereagh was amused to perceive in the crowd behind Cornwallis a British officer cordially embracing one of the French suite.³

A general election was due under the Septennial Act in the summer of 1802, and as the session drew to a close the United Parliament betrayed a marked legislative zeal, and Castlereagh became more regular in his attendance. The grosser kinds of clerical non-residence were prohibited, the civil list was reduced and the obnoxious income tax repealed; furthermore, Dr. Jenner was voted £10,000 for his discovery of vaccination against small-pox, and a laudable attempt was made to suppress bear-baiting.⁴ Castlereagh, intent upon imperial improvement, likewise succeeded in obtaining a parliamentary grant of £10,000 in aid of the Sierra Leone Company, so that the existence might be continued of the British colony where every negro was free.⁵ A conspicuous debate was provided by the Opposition, who tabled a motion of censure upon Pitt and the late government. Foster, sometime Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, said some unpleasant things about the late Irish Secretary, particularly with regard to carrying the Union. Castlereagh met his charges confidently, and the motion was negatived by a large majority. It

¹ Castlereagh to Marsden, Jan. 1, 1802: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 374.

² Knox to Castlereagh, Feb. 23: *Cast. Corr.* iv. 219.

³ See *Corn. Corr.* iii. 487.

⁴ *Parl. Hist.* xxxvi. *passim*.

⁵ *Parl. Reg.* xviii. 683 (June 11). The Company transferred its rights to the Crown in 1807.

was a proud moment for both pupil and master when the grateful resolution passed 'that the Right Honourable William Pitt had rendered great and important services to his country and especially deserves the gratitude of the House.'¹

More than any of his contemporaries Castlereagh had gained the esteem and respect as well as the friendship of 'the pilot that weathered the storm.' For the moment the pilot had left the ship (though not like Palinurus), and as they saw him retch incessantly in the hands of a doctor his friends rightly concluded that he would not be with them for many years longer. Castlereagh realised that he was heir to a great political inheritance. How sound indeed had his grandfather's advice been twelve years ago, that he should become 'a friend of the Pitt administration in England,' of whose merits he had at the same time been convinced!² Admiration for that administration had been echoed in his maiden speeches in both Parliaments, and later as Chief Secretary in Ireland he had achieved a measure of imperial unity which he knew to be very near the heart of his leader. Now he was about to continue his policy in a wider sphere and to weather even a greater storm. As he took up his pen to draft a Cabinet memorandum on Anglo-French relations in the light of the definitive treaty the shadow of Mr. Pitt fell across his desk. (It was his first essay in diplomacy, and Addington, at whose request he undertook it, was profoundly impressed and determined to strengthen his government by the inclusion of its author.³) Years later when the glories of Paris and Vienna were beginning to pale before the angry crowds gesticulating outside his house in St. James's, the shadow was still there. In thanking the Pope at this latter period for the present of some sculpture in acknowledgment of his assistance in restoring to Rome those works of art which had been carried off by the French, Castlereagh wrote: 'The four figures of Fame are destined by me to ornament the four corners of an altar on which I shall place the bust of Mr. Pitt. I cannot render His Holiness's present a more respectful homage than by thus employing them to do honour to the memory

¹ *Parl. Hist.* xxxvi. 654 (May 7).

² See above, p. 77.

³ 'Review of the Relative Situation of Great Britain and France' [April 1802]: *Cast. Corr.* v. 29.

of an individual to whom the world is most indebted, for its peace and for its triumphs.' ¹

Parliament was dissolved in June, and members returned to their constituencies for the general election. Before setting off for Down Castlereagh had several conversations with Addington. Though he had not spoken perhaps as frequently as he wished during the session, he had certainly made the best impression of all the Irish members, both in the lobbies and in the chamber itself. His speeches on the peace treaty and the memoranda with which at the same time he furnished Addington on the subject are models of diplomatic foresight and common sense.² In the course of these conversations the Prime Minister explained that Lord Lewisham had not been a conspicuous success at the India Office, and that it was proposed to find a more congenial occupation for him in the royal household. He therefore offered Castlereagh the post of President of the Board of Control. He added that Lord Wellesley, the viceroy, who for some years had been busily establishing the British Empire in India, was on the point of resigning as a protest against the unnecessary interference of the East India Company directors in his administration; and that much skilful management would be required on the part of a tried and capable minister to avert this catastrophe.³ As this post was unconnected with Ireland or the Catholics, Castlereagh felt justified in accepting it; ⁴ and he immediately staved off the threatened resignation in Calcutta by assuring his fellow-Irishman that 'my utmost exertions shall be employed to give stability to your administration and to co-operate with you in the conduct of Indian affairs with that cordiality which can alone render our united exertions successful.' ⁵

Castlereagh has been severely criticised for accepting office in an anti-Catholic ministry, but in the circumstances it is difficult to see what else he could have done with greater propriety. The Addington administration was not exclusively anti-Catholic, and at most its members were agreed that the King's sanity must not

¹ Castlereagh to Cardinal Gonsalvi, Jan. 22, 1817: Foreign Office Archives (F.O., Italian States, 10).

² See *Cast. Corr.* v. 29 *et seq.*

³ Addington to Wellesley, Sept. 28: *Wellesley Papers*, i. 152.

⁴ The date of his patent as President of the Board of Control is July 12, 1802: Hadyn, *Book of Dignities*, 252.

⁵ Castlereagh to Wellesley, Aug. 10: *Wellesley Despatches*, iii. 32.

so long as he lived be endangered by agitating Catholic emancipation. Besides this, none of the ministers who resigned in the previous year had pledged themselves only to return to office empowered to carry this measure.¹ Furthermore, Pitt himself pressed him to accept office under Addington. On the general principle Castlereagh, however, made it clear to the Prime Minister that his sentiments remained unchanged. He was still most anxious that his scheme for the State endowment of the Catholic clergy should be put into operation, but at the moment the priests were unwilling to accept any such provision while the laity went unsatisfied. On the eve of his election in Downpatrick he wrote to Addington : ' To soften religious contention in this country and to bring it gradually to a temper which shall in future wars deprive our foreign enemies of a certain ally in the resentful feelings of one of two contending parties, some effort must be made by the State to mitigate the struggle which I see no means it has of accomplishing if seven-eighths of our population are to remain wholly out of reach of any species of influence or authority other than that of the mere operation of the law.' ²

In Downpatrick Castlereagh realised his hopes that ' those who don't like me will at least let me alone,' for he was returned a member for County Down unopposed.³ The electors gave him an enthusiastic reception, and there was even talk of erecting a statue in his honour.⁴ Glad that he was ' again to be a *man of business*' he quickly returned to London, calling *en route* at the country residences of Dundas and Cornwallis, so that he might learn some of the mysteries of the Board of Control.⁵ This office carried with it a seat in the Cabinet, to which body he was formally admitted when it reassembled after the recess. He now became an intimate participator in imperial and international affairs, and thus was the theatre of his activities expanded and completely changed. ' From this time forward his main attention was directed to foreign affairs ; and his biography becomes the diplomatic history of Europe, down to the period of his death twenty years later.' ⁶

¹ *Cast. Corr.* iv. 373.

² Castlereagh to Addington, July 21 : *Cast. Corr.* iv. 229.

³ July 24 : *Belfast News-Letter*, July 29. Castlereagh to Marsden, July 5, 24 : Dublin Castle MSS.

⁴ Drennan to McTier : *Drennan Letters*, 986.

⁵ Cornwallis to Ross, Sept. 2 : *Corn. Corr.* iii. 492. ⁶ Alison, i. 164.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

I

It has long been a favourite theme of Irish historians and Irish politicians—the terms are really synonymous—that the English Government first connived at the incitement of rebellion by Castle officials and military authorities, and then deliberately permitted rebellion to break out for the express purpose of forcing a Union between the two countries. The exponents of this popular conception assert that Lord Chancellor Clare, who was the ringleader, had long wished to deprive Ireland of her legislative independence; and ‘joined with him in this conspiracy were some others and in the number Lord Castlereagh, all of whom, with cold-blooded artifice, stirred up an insurrection that was to supply the necessary pretext for affecting their nefarious design.’¹ In support of this charge they quote (i) Lord Moira’s declaration in the British House of Lords that ‘these discontents have arisen from too mistaken an application of severities’;² (ii) Castlereagh’s admission to MacNevin before the Secret Committee of the Commons that the United Irish movement would have been stronger ‘but for the means taken to make it explode’;³ and (iii) the dying instructions of Chief Justice Lord Clonmell to deliver a confidential letter in his possession which showed that the authorities ‘might have crushed the rebellion, but that they let it go on, on purpose to carry the Union, and this was their design.’⁴

Unfortunately for those who had been led to accept these views as correct, the large quantities of documentary evidence which are

¹ MacNevin, *Pieces of History*, 143.

² *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1059 (Nov. 22, 1797). ³ MacNevin, 242.

⁴ Grattan, ii. 145. This story has been conclusively disproved: see Sir James O’Connor, *History of Ireland*, i. 99 *et seq.*

now available point to a diametrically opposite conclusion. Any one who cares to examine the confidential correspondence which passed between Whitehall and Dublin Castle during this period must be immediately convinced that the English ministers did their best to prevent the outbreak of a rebellion which they knew might, with the aid of a successful French invasion, result in the permanent separation of the sister Kingdom. England had embarked on a life and death struggle with France, which was to last with one short intermission for twenty years. In 1797 she was almost at her last gasp. Had Hoche succeeded in effecting a landing at Bantry Bay, Ireland would in all probability have been lost and the ground prepared for a decisive rear-attack. The mutinies at Spithead and the Nore indicated the lamentable condition of the British Navy; and it was small wonder that when Lord Malmesbury endeavoured to negotiate for peace in Lille 'on his knees,' the self-confident Directorate should have packed him out of the country within twenty-four hours. England was only saved by sheer good fortune and Pitt's indomitable courage. For many months her fate hung in the balance. That her ministers should have sought to add to their embarrassments at such a time by deliberately fomenting a savage rebellion in Ireland which withdrew a large number of regular forces from the main theatre of war and required an occupation army of over 130,000 men to subdue it is inconceivable except to the most puerile and partisan imagination.¹

On their side the Castle officials and local aristocracy were equally anxious to prevent a national rising, which they dreaded above all things. When planning the Bantry Bay expedition Tone said to Hoche: 'When we get to Ireland, the aristocracy and gentry are so odious that I am afraid we shall not be able to save them from a general massacre.'² John Sheares and his friends openly advocated political assassination. The Secret Committee of the Commons reported through Castlereagh, 'upon a review of the whole evidence that has been laid before the Committee, that a complete revolution and confiscation of property and the establishment of a republic upon French principles are the real objects of the conspiracy and not amelioration of their present

¹ O'Connor, *History of Ireland*, i. 95.

² J. Whiteside, *Life and Death of the Irish Parliament*, 194.

condition.’¹ Beresford, reactionary though he was, did not exaggerate when barely six weeks before the outbreak he confided in Auckland his doubts whether the English executive realised how serious the internal situation of Ireland had become.²

‘CURRAGHMORE, 10th April, 1798.

‘... I really do not know whether Government do or do not communicate to your ministry the papers and evidences of treason and rebellion which come before our cabinet; but if they do ministers must perceive the state this country is in, and that it must in fact be conquered again or lost to Great Britain. People at a distance can, without evidence before them, but ill-judge of our situation.

‘We that are on the spot, witnesses of everything, whose lives and properties are at stake, whose dearest connections are every day threatened with massacre, who see our connection with Great Britain and our Constitution in Church and State on the brink of ruin, whose everything dear and valuable in life depends upon the measures which shall be taken to avert the danger, are supposed to be foolishly, wantonly, and corruptly pushing the people forward to the committal of those crimes which must be our ruin. How can rational men entertain such notions? ...’

That the rising when it came was still-born, chiefly by reason of the successive arrests of its leaders and the prompt measures taken by the local executive to disarm their followers, has never been denied; but this does not constitute evidence of a deeply-laid plot to goad a peaceful community into armed revolt, much less with the object of achieving a Union, an idea which did not take definite shape in Pitt’s mind till after the rebellion was over.

In the English House of Lords, Lord Moira, speaking in the autumn of 1797, stigmatised the Irish Government as ‘the most disgusting tyranny any nation ever groaned under.’³ When the rebellion broke out six months later, this language was echoed in the lower House by Sheridan, who moved for a committee on the state of Ireland.⁴ The publication of these speeches produced an animated debate at College Green, where the Solicitor-General (Toler) drew the attention of the House to statements which ‘attribute to particular individuals sentiments and expressions

¹ *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, as presented by Lord Viscount Castlereagh, August 21, 1798*, at p. 71.

² *Auck. Corr.* iii. 401.

³ *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1059 (Nov. 2, 1797).

⁴ *Parl. Hist.* xxxiii. 1487 (June 14, 1798).

tending to charge the nobility, the gentry, and the Parliament of Ireland with the foulest criminality, as if, by a studied system of oppressive and cruel laws, they had driven the people of this country to rebellion.' In coming to the rescue of the parties so charged Castlereagh pointed out in a convincing speech that after all they best knew the true situation of the country, and were therefore the best judges of the proper measures to be taken for the restoration of order. Though the charges brought by Moira and Sheridan trenched upon the executive authority, which he was always loath should form a topic for public discussion, he nevertheless met them with frankness and sincerity.

'The world would bear witness to the human caution with which the Parliament of Ireland had proceeded in meeting in their progress the machinations by which the Rebellion was so long fomented, and would admit that, if any blame had been fairly incurred by them on this head, it was by their extreme lenity and tardiness to meet sedition much sooner by measures of severity. For his own part, as one connected with the Government of the country, he would speak from consciousness and perfect conviction of their utter unwillingness to adopt harsh or severe measures, so long as they were avoidable or consistent with the good or safety of the State. . . .

'It would be admitted no doubt that, in the very nature of a conflict such as at present agitated this unfortunate country, it was impossible to prevent some acts of violence from taking place. But he was satisfied to appeal to the evidence of that House, of the country at large, and to every proof which could be brought forward on every future investigation, as to the conduct of those to whom that House had entrusted the suppression of the Rebellion—whether Government had not on all occasions used its utmost efforts to control and prevent, as far as reached its knowledge, every act of unnecessary violence on the part of those entrusted with the execution of its commands.'¹

The official 'tardiness' referred to by Castlereagh was the result, not of a deliberate policy of holding back the Government forces so as to be able to crush the rebellion more effectually, but of the extreme difficulty experienced at first in bringing the leading rebels to book in the face of their secret organisation and guerilla tactics and the consequent lack of evidence to convict them. 'The Rebellion with which the country has to do,' he told the House of Commons at the beginning of May 1798, 'is not of that kind

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, July 3, 1798. *Republication of Four Speeches delivered in the Irish House of Commons, June 28, 1798* (Hereford, 1798).

which may be met in open day—it avails itself in cowardly security of the principles and the dagger of the assassin.’¹ A modern analogy immediately presents itself to the historian’s mind. When the Sinn Fein organisation commenced to shoot policemen in 1919 the British Government found it impossible to bring a single offender to justice, even though there was a large army and an armed and well-disciplined police force in the country. After the Treaty of 1921 the Irish Government found itself equally powerless, and it was only after recourse was had to the drastic policy of shooting republican prisoners in its hands that the murders ceased.²

2

Some thirty years after the rebellion Tom Moore, whilst making a necessary journey to Bath, fell in with an interesting travelling companion in the person of Watson Taylor. This gentleman had been private secretary to Lord Camden when the latter was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Conversation turned on some of the events in Ireland to which they had each in his own way been witness. Taylor endeavoured to convince the author of *The Fudge Family in Paris* that he had been wrong in his judgment of Castlereagh’s political character. ‘Could not easily grant him this,’ noted Moore the same day in his diary, ‘but owned that I had mixed up Lord Camden with the bloody transactions of ’98 more than his conduct since inclined me to think he deserved.’³

Moore had written a cynical ballad to Castlereagh in which the poet informed him what a villain he was :

‘And that the Irish grateful nation !
Remember when by *thee* reigned over,
And bless thee for their flagellation
As Heloisa did her lover !’⁴

This verse contains the gravest reflection which has been made upon the character of the Irish Secretary. ‘The most difficult and yet perhaps, for the honour of Lord Castlereagh’s character

¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, May 7. See above, p. 242.

² O’Connor, *History of Ireland*, i. 79.

³ June 10, 1828 : T. Moore, *Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence*, v. 314 (ed. Russell).

⁴ T. Moore, *Poetical Works*, 441 (ed. W. M. Rossetti, 1911).

and memory, the most necessary topic on which the biographer of the late Marquess will have to dwell,' wrote an observer in one of his obituary notices, 'is that part of Irish history in which his Lordship was charged with having had a wilful and wicked share in promoting the horrid and unheard-of cruelties committed by Government on the Irish rebels.'¹ In this respect neither his contemporaries nor their descendants have treated him with either kindness or consideration. The majority of both classes has regarded him as the Robespierre of Ireland and the potential if not the actual author of every atrocity committed in that country during the closing years of the eighteenth century. To them he has always been 'Bloody Castlereagh,' the cruel and calculating fiend with a heart of stone and a mask of ice, the staunch advocate of martial law and torture.

In the first place Castlereagh's attitude towards martial law is deserving of a more dispassionate regard than it has frequently received hitherto. The circumstances may be briefly stated. On May 24, 1798, martial law was proclaimed throughout Ireland by the Lord-Lieutenant in Council.² In the course of the ensuing twelve months this law was administered by virtue of the Crown prerogative, and those to whom its execution was directly entrusted relied upon Parliament subsequently passing an Act of Indemnity should the legality of their conduct be called in question. At the time of the Proclamation it was proposed to legalise the operation of martial law by anticipation, *i.e.* by passing a Bill to authorise the trial by courts-martial of persons engaged in the rebellion; but this proposal was overruled, as Castlereagh put it, 'upon the principle that there was less violence to the Constitution in giving indemnity to those who have acted illegally for the preservation of the State, than in enacting laws so adverse to the usual spirit of our legislature.'³ So long as the rebels were in the field and civil war was raging the authority of the military courts was not questioned; but when the civil courts commenced to function again, it was seen that sooner or later there must be a clash of jurisdictions. This contingency in fact took place in

¹ J. Nightingale, *A Calm and Dispassionate View of the Life and Administration of the late Marquess of Londonderry* (London, 1822), at p. 8.

² See above, p. 250.

³ Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 16, 1798: *Cast. Corr.* i. 447.

the case of Wolfe Tone.¹ Castlereagh stated the difficulty under this head in a speech at Westminster in 1801 :

‘ The Rebellion broke out in May 1798, and the Government then published a Proclamation of Martial Law. They proceeded from May 1798 to May 1799 exercising martial law wherever rebellion existed, without any express enactment for that purpose, on the principle that they were authorised by the King’s prerogative, provided they did not transgress the necessity of the case. Nothing could have induced them to alter the strict constitutional system, but that they felt they must deny to a great part of the country the advantages of the civil law unless it was incorporated with the martial law. The two systems could not co-exist ; for how could the martial law be executed if it was liable to be thwarted by the civil law ? Though it was put down in the field, the spirit of Jacobinism infused itself into the country which it afflicted in a manner still more distressing, because not liable to be in the same manner attacked by the King’s forces. Rebellion is not less rebellion because it is less open ; because it aims at thwarting the administration of civil justice in the courts of law, not combating the soldiers in open warfare. By the energy of the King’s forces it has been driven from the open field ; but if martial law is not permitted, the same system of terror will prevail, and the Government cannot expect from the loyal and well affected an allegiance which it is incapable of protecting. Such has been the necessity of the case that it has superseded all formal authority.’²

A kindred difficulty presented itself in the extreme and unexpected length of time which was required to effect the complete suppression of the rebellion. ‘ Were the struggle but of short duration, perhaps the inconvenience would be trifling,’ wrote Castlereagh at the time of Tone’s case ; ‘ but if it is to be procrastinated, which there is but too much reason to apprehend may be the case in this Kingdom where religious resentment as well as principles of resistance are so deeply and extensively implanted, it is a question whether military authority in some degree is not requisite to keep society together ; and if so, the responsibility of doing an act which, in the eye of the law, is in strictness murder, is too weighty to be encountered in the prospect of future indemnity.’³ It was in accordance with this opinion that early in 1799 the Chief Secretary authorised the Law Officers to prepare and introduce a Martial Law Act. This Act, which was

¹ See above, p. 270.

² *Eng. Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1010.

³ Castlereagh to Wickham, Nov. 16, 1798 : *Cast. Corr.* ii. 447.

renewed in 1800 and 1801, conferred no new powers ; it simply went to prevent a conflict of jurisdiction by giving a constitutional *imprimatur* to prerogative proceedings. Circumstances fully justified its renewal. 'The system of rebellion in Ireland, now transmuted from contests in the field to secret assassination and threatenings, is one unparalleled in history, unknown in any other age or country,' he declared in the speech quoted above. 'It is some consolation that if we are driven to keep this measure alive and suspend the trial by jury, it is at a time when that mode of trial would be less beneficially exercised for the ends of justice, and at a time when by convicting one criminal we should be exposing twelve loyal subjects. . . . While the Rebellion exists it must be met by energetic measures. I know of no measure to meet rebellion but martial law. By continuing it you will prevent the Rebellion which is only local from becoming general, you will prevent the necessity of employing the King's forces for the protection of a large body of his Majesty's subjects.'¹

Although the Martial Law Acts invested the Lord Lieutenant with many of the powers of a despot, it cannot be said that Cornwallis exercised them despotically. He spent four hours every day examining the minutes and reports of trials, and he never permitted the punishment of any individual except after the most careful investigation of his case.² He did not hesitate, if he thought fit, to censure and dissolve a court-martial. For instance, in October 1798 an Orange yeoman named Wollaghan was acquitted by a properly constituted military court presided over by Lord Enniskillen of what appeared to be on the face of the evidence a cruel and deliberate murder. Cornwallis immediately announced his disapprobation of the verdict in the strongest terms, ordered the court-martial to be dissolved, and forbade any of its members to sit in the same capacity again. He further directed that Wollaghan should be dismissed his yeomanry corps, and should not be received into any other corps in the Kingdom. This case aroused considerable interest in both countries. Camden, who thought that the sentence was too severe, invited his nephew's agreement. 'That the violence of some of the partisans of the

¹ *Eng. Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1014, 1017.

² Castlereagh to Wickham, March 6, 1799 : H.O. Ireland, 86. Details of names, crimes, sentences, with the Lord-Lieutenant's comments, running to almost 100 folio pages, are given in this despatch.

Protestant interest should be repressed, I believe you know I sincerely think,' he wrote to him at this time, 'but that a condemnation of them should take place will infinitely hurt the English interest in Ireland.'¹ Though Castlereagh said nothing on this case to Camden, it is clear from his correspondence with Elliot that he agreed with the latter that Cornwallis had 'acted most judiciously in so severely censuring and discountenancing the conduct of the Court,' and that 'it is more than ever our policy to preserve and maintain the character of our military tribunals.'²

In fact Castlereagh was all along a self-avowed supporter of Cornwallis's 'system of lenity,' which he described as 'so much condemned by certain persons in this country.' It was, however, a system of firmness combined with mercy, though the element of coercion was not sufficient to satisfy the Castle junto led by Clare and Beresford. 'If many and striking examples could redeem a country, we ought to have made by this time some progress towards our redemption,' the Chief Secretary admitted at the time of the introduction of the first Martial Law Act. 'If we have not, it is plain the disease is most deeply implanted, for most assuredly the remedy has been in its nature strong and pretty extensively applied.'³

Castlereagh's attitude to the conduct of certain individuals during the period when the country was under martial law has also been grossly misrepresented. It has never been denied by any trustworthy authority that acts of violence, in many instances amounting to torture, were committed by soldiers and magistrates in order to discover the large stocks of arms which were concealed throughout the country. Both Lord Chancellor Clare and John Claudius Beresford actually attempted to justify such acts before the United Parliament, and Sir Richard Musgrave did the same in his history of the rebellion—in fact Musgrave had himself once flogged a suspected rebel through the streets of Waterford in the absence of the usual executioner.⁴ But none of

¹ Camden to Castlereagh, Nov. 4, 1798 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 425.

² Elliot to Castlereagh, Nov. 2, 1798 : *Cast. Corr.* i. 422.

³ Castlereagh to Wickham, March 6, 1799 : H.O. Ireland, 86. See above, p. 319.

⁴ *Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1237, 1048. R. Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Rebellion*, ii. 481 (3rd ed.). *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xxxix. 423.

these men ventured to suggest that any of the acts in question were ever authorised by the Government. To consider Castle-reagh as personally responsible for those which took place during his term of office is like considering a modern United States Secretary of State as personally responsible for the questionable methods employed by the local police in the detection of crime. Indeed, far from sympathising with such acts, Castlereagh did his utmost to prevent them ; and he was at pains to state most emphatically in Parliament ' his dislike of the system of corporal punishments altogether, and to say that nothing could justify them but the necessity of the case for which they were inflicted.' To a critic who asserted that under colour of the Martial Law Act ' torture was inflicted upon the people of Ireland,' he replied that ' if the honourable member meant to attach to any Irish government either during or since the rebellion the adoption or use of torture, such a charge was wholly and absolutely unfounded.' While admitting that regrettable acts had taken place which the gravity of the times had rendered the executive powerless to prevent, he strenuously denied that a single one of them had at any time received the slightest mark of official approbation. A prime object of the Martial Law Bill was ' to prevent those cruel acts from being repeated by individuals from an apprehension of their own preservation,' and he was able to declare with some pride that ' from the moment it passed in Ireland, that species of individual violence subsided.'¹

During the decade which followed the Union the unsavoury topic of official tyranny was allowed to rest. Then in 1810 it was suddenly blazed forth again in the case of *R. v. Finnerty*. Public attention was focussed upon the late Irish Secretary, who was made to appear the principal instigator of a nefarious system by which the Irish nation was put on the rack. Peter Finnerty was an eccentric and hot-headed Irish journalist, who had published Arthur O'Connor's inflammatory newspaper *The Press* (the spiritual successor of *The Northern Star*), and for his comments on the trial of William Orr he had suffered various punishments, including the pillory.² After the Union he went to London,

¹ *Eng. Parl. Hist.* xxxv. 1038, 1048.

² *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xix. 38. Howell's *State Trials*, xxvi. 902. At his subsequent trial in 1811 Finnerty stated in the depositions which he

where he joined the staff of the *Morning Chronicle*, and in 1809 he accompanied the Walcheren expedition as special correspondent for that journal. His *communiqués* from the theatre of war were so indiscreet that he soon had to be sent home. For this treatment he blamed Castlereagh who was then Secretary for War, though as it happened the latter had nothing whatever to do with his removal. Finnerty now libelled the minister with marked ferocity, accusing him, *inter alia*, of 'having sanctioned torture,' and of 'having been guilty of tyranny, cruelty and oppression in his administration of the government of Ireland.'¹ Edward Cooke was referred to as 'his trusty friend and coadjutor during the torture of my unfortunate fellow-countrymen.' At the same time he published a number of damaging affidavits sworn by his friends; in one of these documents the deponent stated that 'in the year 1798 various kinds of torture such as whippings, picketings, half-hangings, etc., etc., were practised in Dublin close to the Castle gate,' and moreover 'that Lord Castlereagh could have heard the cries of the sufferers in his office.' In consequence of these and similar statements the minister instituted criminal proceedings against Finnerty, though he declared that it was very reluctantly and only with a deep sense of public duty that he did so.² (Had he not shortly after his resignation in 1801 expressed the hope that 'those who don't like me will at least let me alone'?³) After a long trial which provoked an unusual amount of popular interest and excitement, Finnerty was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Lincoln gaol.

Castlereagh assured the House of Commons at this time that he entertained no bitter feelings towards Finnerty personally, and submitted to prove his charges that Castlereagh 'was actually *locum tenens* for Mr. Pelham as First Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant at the time of Orr's execution, and that the noble lord was one of the Council which decided upon the execution of Orr': *The Case of Peter Finnerty*, xvii. (1811). Both these statements are untrue. Castlereagh did not commence to act for Pelham, nor did he become a member of the Privy Council till after Orr's execution. At the time Orr's case was being considered, Castlereagh was with his regiment in Dundalk. See above, p. 195.

¹ *Morning Chronicle*, Jan. 23, 1810.

² *Proceedings in the Case of the King, at the Prosecution of Lord Castlereagh against Peter Finnerty, King's Bench Division* (London, 1811). Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xxxvi. 1405.

³ See above, p. 413.

even pleaded for a mitigation of his punishment. But he also entered a categorical denial of Finnerty's libellous assertions, and admitted his readiness if necessary 'to prove to the satisfaction of the House and the country that the general conduct of the Irish administration (he spoke not of individual instances of cruelty which nothing could justify) was at that time fully justifiable.'¹ The opportunity which he sought did not come for some years; and when it did he was taken by surprise, for the subject was introduced on the last day of the session in 1817. Brougham, weary of denouncing the minister's diplomacy, endeavoured to revive the drooping spirits of the House of Commons by recalling 'with what scenes in Ireland his administration had formerly been attended.'²

The cry was immediately taken up on the Opposition benches; and one member, who proceeded to read out some of Finnerty's affidavits, coolly asserted that if the noble lord and the other members of his Irish administration had not flogged their miserable victims with their own hands, 'they were at least guilty of having not only not punished those who had perpetrated these enormities, but of having singled them out as fit objects for reward.'³ The intended reference here is to Thomas Judkin Fitzgerald, the notorious High Sheriff of Tipperary, who by a general and indiscriminate use of the lash had succeeded in suppressing the rebellion in his neighbourhood. His system was to flog every suspected rebel 'till he told the truth,' inasmuch that on his own admission 'men who refused to give any information on his first taking them up did after some flogging make ample discoveries.' In fact he went so far as to state in open court that 'he felt himself authorised to take every mode of obtaining confessions, and that in order to discover the truth, if every other mode failed, he had a right to cut off their heads.' It is scarcely surprising that this description of his ultimate process of arriving at the truth should have 'a little discomposed the gravity of the court.'⁴ A number of perfectly innocent persons appear to have been flogged on his express orders. One of them (a schoolmaster named Wright) subsequently brought an action of assault against him, and obtained a verdict of £500 damages at Clonmel Assizes.

¹ Hansard, xx. 734.

² Hansard, xxxvi. 1391 (July 11, 1817).

³ Hansard, xxxvi. 1415 *et seq.*

⁴ Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 763.

The outraged High Sheriff thereupon brought his case before the Irish Parliament, and a grateful House of Commons paid his damages and indemnified him against similar vexatious actions in the future.¹ Although Castlereagh was anxious at the time 'to protect those who had acted for the public service with good intentions, however in a moment of struggle and warmth they might have erred in point of discretion,' there is no evidence to show that he ever approved of Fitzgerald's conduct. On the contrary he welcomed, in his own words, the 'laudable disposition in the Bench to condemn what appears, as the case is stated, a severity not altogether called for'; he purposely abstained from taking any part in the parliamentary proceedings by which Fitzgerald was indemnified; and he stated it as his honest opinion to Portland that he could not 'conceive that any man should be indemnified who appears to a jury to have acted maliciously, and in which opinion the Bench concurs.'²

Castlereagh did not conceal his surprise that Brougham without warning should have chosen the last day of the session to bring up such an odious subject. Nevertheless he defended himself with considerable vigour, and he took the opportunity of reviewing his conduct as Chief Secretary in the light of the accusations which had been made.³ He asked why the cruelties alleged to have been committed by himself and his colleagues in Ireland had not long since been made the foundation of an impeachment, if they were believed to be true. He then glanced at Finnerty's affidavits and easily dismissed those capable of refutation. One of them, for instance, charged him with having sent a man to Botany Bay on his own authority. He showed that the man in question had been sentenced to transportation by a properly constituted court-martial consisting of fifteen officers. In another affidavit he was accused of having been present at the infliction of torture. While not denying that summary modes of corporal punishment had been employed by the military in the suppression of the rebellion, he had no hesitation in stating that he himself

¹ *Proceedings in the House of Commons on the Petition of T. Judkin Fitzgerald, Esq., praying Indemnity for certain acts done by him in the suppression of the Irish Rebellion, April 1799*: Howell's *State Trials*, xxvii. 766-819.

² Castlereagh to Portland, April 26, 1799: *Cast. Corr.* ii. 281, 282.

³ Hansard, xxxvi. 1396-1408, 1419-1421.

had never been present at any of these punishments. 'I have never in the course of my life seen any man flogged,' he added, 'except a soldier in my own militia regiment.'

His final remarks made a great impression on the House and put an end to the subject in Parliament, so far as he was concerned. They have fortunately been recorded as they were delivered.

'With respect to Ireland, I know I never shall be forgiven. I have with many others incurred the inexpressible guilt of preserving that main branch of the British Empire from that separation which the traitors of Ireland, in conjunction with a foreign power, had meditated. We know how far the treaty on this subject was carried into effect—we know how solemnly it was made—we know the dreadful dangers which were attendant on it. Those who were foiled in their attempt have consoled themselves by endeavouring, as far as they could, to throw calumny on my name and character. For what reason? Because I exerted myself to defend the people of Ireland from the conspiracy which surrounded them. My conduct has been the constant theme of invective. But I think those who are acquainted with me will do me the justice to believe that I never had a cruel or an unkind heart. I believe they would not think that I went farther in prosecuting even the guilty in Ireland than necessity demanded, or that I had recourse to measures beyond what the danger of the times imperatively demanded.

'If there were cruelties committed in Ireland (and I never denied that there were), they must fall on the heads of those who provoked that guilty and unnatural rebellion. I say, if the loyal men of Ireland took steps which they abhorred and ever must deplore, it was because they were the persecuted and not the persecuting party. Standing in that situation they were authorised to use those means which God and nature had placed in their hands for the protection of their lives and properties against lawless force and violence. When in consequence of the state of the country martial law was proclaimed, when the rebels were in the field, Government had no power to repress the excesses of loyal men.'

The last word in this debate, remarkable for its length and the extreme variety of topics upon which it touched, was uttered by Canning, who oddly enough came to the rescue of his old enemy in one of his most witty and brilliant speeches.¹ For the moment he forgot the meeting on Putney Heath and its political consequences, which had condemned him to a cold exile on the Opposition benches for nearly eight years; and as he ruthlessly

¹ Hansard, xxxvi. 1423.

exposed the injustice of Brougham's charges, he left no doubt in the minds of the majority of his audience that they were entirely without foundation. His references to Castlereagh's clemency were greeted with loud approval in almost every quarter of the House. Outside it, unfortunately, they made little or no impression, and Cobbet, Moore, Byron and Shelley continued to keep alive and enlarge the black legend which men like Finnerty and his associates had invented.

It is significant that Brougham, who led the attack upon Castlereagh in Parliament, should subsequently have acknowledged that so far as the accusation of cruelty was concerned he was mistaken. In his *Historical Sketches of the Statesmen of the Reign of George the Third*, which is upon the whole adverse to the minister, the writer admits that 'Lord Castlereagh uniformly and strenuously set his face against the atrocities committed in Ireland; and that to him, more than perhaps anyone else, was to be attributed the termination of the system stained with blood.'¹

3

In the preceding pages much less attention has been given to the private than to the public aspects of Castlereagh's early life. This bias might conceivably be justified on the ground that his official activities have been made the subject of such widespread controversy. But in point of fact comparatively little is known of the man himself beyond what has been already stated. He had no Tomline or Stapleton to do for him what was done for Pitt and Canning, his two principal contemporaries. Neither his brother Charles nor his 'dearest Emily' apparently had the time or the inclination to tell his story as they, and only they, must have known it. While Charles contented himself with erecting a literary memorial in the shape of twelve massive volumes ostensibly devoted to the preservation of his official correspondence, Emily said nothing at all. She left no diary or reminiscences behind her, nor indeed any letters of consequence: if she was indiscreet during her lifetime she has amply atoned for it by her posthumous silence.

As for Charles (the 'Lord Pumpnickel' of the *Corps diplo-*

¹ Brougham, *op. cit.* ii. 126.

matique—he fought a coachman in Vienna, and was noted for the magnificence of his uniforms), he was genuinely anxious to rescue his brother's memory from the depths to which a quarter of a century's persistent abuse had brought it. He approached Sir Walter Scott with masses of documents he had succeeded in securing from the Court of Chancery, an institution which he did not persuade without a struggle to disgorge his brother's papers with 'many chasms and losses.'¹ Sir Walter politely declined the offer. He knew nothing of politics, he said, and in any case surely 'the publication of such official documents, with a plain and fair statement of the facts which support them, is a task which any honest and manly biographer can easily perform.'² Charles, now third Marquess of Londonderry, thereupon turned to the Reverend Samuel Turner, 'an excellent and invaluable divine,' who had been private tutor to his son; and he accordingly placed all the relevant MSS. which he could collect, including 'an intimate fraternal correspondence for twenty-five successive years,' in the hands of this worthy gentleman. Shortly afterwards the chosen biographer's merits secured his elevation to the see of Calcutta; but whilst on his way out to India to take up his episcopal duties, the ship in which he was a passenger was wrecked and all the papers were lost.³

Though the loss was perhaps not so considerable as has sometimes been thought, since many of the documents had previously been transcribed, no other biographer was immediately forthcoming. It was not till after the appearance of the *Cornwallis Correspondence* thirty years later had directed public attention towards the less attractive features of the history of the Union that Charles prevailed upon the ponderous and verbose Sir Archibald Alison to undertake a biography. The result was a pompous panegyric on both brothers, which was aptly described at the time as a 'wearisome and stupendous exhibition of continual laudation.'⁴ 'The world would have hailed with delight a genuine biography of Lord Castlereagh,' wrote a contemporary

¹ Memoir of Viscount Castlereagh, by his brother: *Cast. Corr.* i. 142.

² Sir W. Scott to Rev. S. M. Turner, Oct. 27, 1827: *Cast. Corr.* i. 104.

³ *Cast. Corr.* i. 143. The ship, the *Carn Brae Castle*, was wrecked off the Isle of Wight, July 3, 1829: *Annual Register*, 1829, at p. 118.

⁴ *Athenæum*, Dec. 14, 1861.

reviewer. 'The private life of a public man is of all things that of which the British public is fondest. But there is no private life in the three big volumes before us. They contain, with some trifling exceptions, nothing whatever but a record of his public services, with which the public was reasonably well acquainted already.'¹ Alison might at least have disproved some of the fictitious anecdotes which were in circulation about his subject, but he evidently considered that such a task was beneath his dignity. For information regarding Castlereagh's private life the student must turn to other sources than that provided by his official biographer, and unfortunately those which may be accounted trustworthy are extremely scanty.

It is significant that the majority of Castlereagh's political enemies who attacked his public career with the greatest virulence should have had nothing to say on the other sphere beyond that in private dealings he was perfectly upright and honourable. Barrington, for instance, admits that he 'never had the slightest objection' to Castlereagh in his individual capacity. 'As a private gentleman, I always found him friendly, though cold,' observes this writer in his *Personal Reminiscences*; 'and fair, though ambiguous. I never knew him break his word, and believe him to have been perfectly honourable upon every subject of private interest.'² His outward reserve and the extraordinary powers of self-control, which like his master Pitt he could exercise in the most trying circumstances, were completely misunderstood by those who had but a superficial acquaintance with him, as also by the masses who depended on hearsay in forming their judgment of his personal character. Even Cornwallis, with whom his official relations over a period of two years were always most cordial, found him in private intercourse to be 'so cold that nothing can warm him.'³ But this traditional coldness has been misjudged: it was no more than the natural protection of an extremely shy and sensitive man. The few persons with whom he was on more intimate terms differed from Cornwallis on this point. His confidential private secretary, Alexander Knox, wrote: 'I am gratified at being singled out as the confident friend of the

¹ *New Quarterly Review*, iv. 148.

² Barrington, *Personal Reminiscences*, 173 (ed. 1876).

³ Cornwallis to Ross, Nov. 6, 1803: *Corn. Corr.* iii. 506.

honestest and perhaps the ablest statesman that has been in Ireland for a century. I know of him what the world does not and cannot know, and what, if it did know, it most probably would not believe. . . . Humane he is, and good-natured beyond the usual standard of men. In him it is not merely a habit or a natural quality ; but it is a moral duty. And yet when firm decision is requisite, he can well exert it. What is best of all, he is in reality what Secretary Craggs was only in the encomiastic verse of Pope :

“ Statesman, yet friend to truth.”¹

What little time he could spare from business in Dublin he appears to have spent principally with the Conollys. Lady Sarah Lennox, who often met him in house parties at Castletown, must be reckoned amongst the few whose opinion of him personally is not flattering. ‘ Why Lord Cornwallis kept such an ignorant, vain, shallow Secretary as Lord Castlereagh,’ she wrote to a near friend, ‘ I cannot say.’² Her sister, Lady Louisa Conolly, was on the contrary most sincerely attached to him, and she was careful to contradict the charge of callousness when she described his exertions and agony of mind on account of her wayward nephew, Lord Edward Fitzgerald.³ With Cooke and Elliot and one or two others the barrier of reserve was also dropped, but to the majority of colleagues and subordinates and acquaintances, both official and extra-official, he appeared to be wearing an inscrutable mask ; and his personality has in consequence remained somewhat of a mystery to the outside public. But to those who knew him well he was above all endeared by his frank disposition and the cheerful and unstrained atmosphere which always prevailed in his household. ‘ The calm dignity of his manner gave an impression that he was cold,’ wrote his niece, Lady Brownlow, ‘ but no one who had seen his kindly smile, or been greeted by his two hands stretched out in welcome, could have thought him so. To all those connected with him he was most affectionate.’⁴

¹ Knox to Schoales, July 20, 1798 : A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 31.

² Lady Sarah Napier (Lennox) to Lady Susan O’Brien, March 25, 1799 : Ilchester, *Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, ii. 138.

³ See above, pp. 206, 248.

⁴ Brownlow, *Slight Reminiscences of a Septuagenarian*, 190 (London, 1867). Lady Brownlow was a daughter of the 2nd Earl of Mount Edgumbe by his wife Lady Sophia Hobart. The latter was a half-sister of Lady Castlereagh.

Some indication has already been given of his intense and lifelong devotion to his wife, whose caprices he treated with a good-humoured indulgence which they did not always deserve.¹ A few lines hastily scribbled to her from a solitary lodging-house or post-chaise reveal more of his personality than all his official correspondence in the State archives. 'I cannot tell you what pleasure your letter gave me,' he wrote to her in the third year of their married life. 'No lover could receive a declaration with more satisfaction, and as it is really the principal enjoyment I shall experience till I return to you, I expect that the indulgence will be commensurate with your affection and not sparingly administered. . . . I am rather uneasy, dearest wife, about your riding Prince when I am not with you. Pray don't attempt unless my father is with you. Horses of that nature are never to be depended on—they are asleep one minute and frantick the next. If the bone-setter is disapproved, ask your uncle for the mare, but don't torture me with the idea of your being exposed to danger.'² He was on the happiest terms with all the members of his family, and particularly his father. 'He liked the society of young people,' his niece tells us, 'and far from checking their mirth and nonsense, he enjoyed and encouraged it with his own fun and cheerfulness.'³ His tastes were simple. He loved the country and a country life, and he was never so happy as when walking, riding or driving with Emily. He read little outside political writers. As an indoor pastime he liked principally dancing (at Vienna he was to be observed by one of Metternich's secret police practising the minuet with a chair in his hotel!⁴), but he also played the harpsichord, on which instrument he was a tolerable performer. 'Although a courtier, yet in private life no man could be less assuming,' wrote his brother Charles, 'and his affability at once dissipated that timidity which intercourse with high rank sometimes produces.'⁵ De Quincey, who saw him and Emily at a number of functions in 1800, remembered years afterwards 'the impression of youthful happiness' which they wore.⁶ Such

¹ See above, p. 118.

² Castlereagh to his wife, Aug. 25, 1796: Londonderry MSS.

³ Brownlow, *op. cit.* 191.

⁴ A. Fournier, *Die Geheimpolizei auf dem Wiener Kongress*, 25 (Vienna, 1913).

⁵ Memoir: *Cast. Corr.* i. 82.

⁶ T. De Quincey, *Works*, i. 216.

a pleasing domestic picture is strangely out of keeping with the legendary villain with which the world has been presented by the party pamphleteers and rhymsters.

However frigid he may have seemed in his relations with the outside world, his conduct in the society in which he moved was generally admitted to be marked by the most charming and polished manners. Tall, thin and exceptionally good-looking for his age, he always appeared faultlessly dressed, and wore a peculiar air of elegance combined with a certain suggestion of cynicism. In fact he stood over six feet in his boots, and was described by Dr. Drennan in 1791 as 'one of the handsomest in the House.'¹ The portrait painted of him by Lawrence a few years later fully bears out this description. The high forehead, the calm and thoughtful expression in the eyes, the delicate lips and strong rounded chin confirm a noticeably haughty carriage of the head with its fine crop of medium brown hair. Charles Lever, whose novel *The Knight of Gwynne* contains a vivid sketch of Castlereagh in early life, has admitted that he derived much of his information from one who knew him intimately, though at a later period. The novelist makes no attempt to vindicate the minister against the attacks of his political opponents, but simply tries in his own words 'to represent him such as he was in the society of his intimates, his gay and cheerful temperament, his frank nature, and what least the world is disposed to concede to him, his sincere belief in the honesty of men whose convictions were adverse to him and who could not be won over to his opinions.'² He had the reputation of being a gracious and affable host. His dinner parties in Merrion Street were deservedly popular; for although he personally affected abstemious habits and his knowledge of food and wines was believed to be limited, he had the good sense to keep a versatile cook and a well-stocked cellar.³

¹ See above, p. 79.

² *The Knight of Gwynne*, Preface, p. ix. (ed. 1872). Lever's informant was the Hon. George Hamilton Seymour, younger son of the 1st Marquess of Hertford and hence Castlereagh's first cousin: W. J. Fitzpatrick, *Life of Charles Lever*, ii. 124 note. Seymour entered the Foreign Office in 1819 as précis writer to Castlereagh and became his private secretary in January 1822.

³ When he left Dublin at the end of 1800 there was still a large stock of wines in his house, including over 1,000 bottles of port and claret and 350 of madeira. The list is in the Londonderry MSS.

If he could be grave and formal on occasion, he certainly did not lack a share of native Irish humour which appeared at lighter moments. For instance, Dr. Drennan tells how when he was about to set up his practice in Dublin he invited the newly-elected member for Down to be of assistance to him. The Honourable Mr. Stewart replied 'that he really did not know how to further my interest as an accoucheur,' but 'that he was, however, very much my humble servant, etc.'¹ Nor did he mind a practical joke, even when he was himself the victim. When stationed with his militia regiment at Belfast in the summer of 1801, he went boating one day on Belfast Lough with a party which included his wife and some other ladies. He had previously given orders that his carriages should pick them up at Cultra, a spot some eight miles distant on the Down coast, where they proposed to land and return to Belfast by road. As soon as the carriages arrived at their destination some of the younger members of a prominent local family² who recognised them assured the servants that Lord Castlereagh and his party intended to land some miles farther away near Bangor, 'where they were in vain waited for.' Meanwhile the boating party put into Cultra, and after waiting about for some time to no purpose were compelled to proceed to Belfast on foot.³

4

Though from the commencement of his parliamentary career in 1791 he was compelled for the most part to be an absentee from his family estates in Down, Castlereagh never lost the strong attachment which he had formed in youth for the Ards and the county to which he was bound by strong personal and territorial ties. As his political undertakings increased his visits naturally grew rarer, but he was never so happy as when sailing a boat in Strangford Lough or walking the countryside with a sporting gun. In 1795 he bought a small estate in the barony whence he

¹ Drennan to McTier, June 16, 1806 : *Drennan Letters*, 1257.

² Kennedy of Cultra Manor.

³ McTier to Drennan, Jan. 2, 1802 : *Drennan Letters*, 952 (unpublished).

derived his title, and so he early came to realise the responsibilities of a landlord.¹ Before he left Ireland in 1802 he is said to have built a number of houses for his tenants, and to have established an annual fair for horses and cattle in the neighbourhood and presented prizes for the best exhibits.² He is also said to have endowed schools at Newtownards, Comber and Mount Stewart, and to have supplied them with books.³ The Catholic inhabitants of Strangford benefited by his generosity too ; for, on learning that they were accustomed to assemble for their own devotions in an old house, he caused a proper chapel to be built for them at his own expense.

He helped the local fishing and kelp industries. At his suggestion a small stone pier was constructed by his father as a shelter for the boats, which the fishermen had previously either to drag with much labour across the shingle to the dry land before the demesne or else to leave at the risk of breaking their moorings and being dashed to pieces on the rocks. The pier, which with some rocks opposite formed an ideal harbour, was capable of sheltering a hundred vessels. Posts and mooring chains were put down, and a neat cabin was erected in which an old man and woman were placed as caretakers, and to provide the fishermen with lights when they arrived late at night. Some of the more enterprising shipowners of Strangford and Portaferry used to gather a peculiar seaweed known as kelp on the foreshore below Mount Stewart. The weed was usually burnt and shipped to Scotland for its iodine-bearing properties. For these privileges the traders paid Londonderry dues amounting to £20 a cargo, of which about forty were loaded in a year. Owing to the troubled times the trade languished, and great difficulty was felt in paying the tax. As many of the neighbouring inhabitants were in danger of losing a livelihood, their case was put before Castlereagh, who prevailed upon his father to forego his dues for a year. At the end of that time the tax was not revived as a result of his influence ; nor was any payment ever afterwards demanded, save one shilling a ship merely to preserve the family rights in the beach. For

¹ 'Conveyance of title deeds of Ringcreevy from Hugh Gillespie Esquire to the Honourable Robert Stewart for £2018. 15. 0, Jan. 15. 1795.' : Estate Office MSS.

² Memoir : *Cast. Corr.* i. 72. ³ *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 27, 1822.

this kindness those interested in the trade presented him with a brace of pistols mounted in Wicklow gold.¹

That he was exceedingly popular and well liked both amongst the farmers and the country gentry there is plenty of evidence to prove ; and he never let it be known that he was bored, as he inevitably must have been on occasion, by the society of either class. The task which he accomplished with such tact and skill in the difficult autumn days of 1796, contributing perhaps more than anyone else to win back seventeen hundred of his father's wayward tenantry to their allegiance, commanded the admiration if not the respect of the whole county. His name has, however, been associated with a number of wholly fictitious affairs of gallantry in the neighbourhood. As a result of one of them he is reported to have fought a duel in the most romantic circumstances. His reputed antagonist was Lord Charles Fitzgerald (later Lord Lecale), and the meeting is supposed to have taken place early in the morning on a rocky island near Ardglass, where this gentleman had a country seat. According to the story, neither pistol found a human mark, and immediately after the meeting Castlereagh set out on a shooting party, saying nothing about the affair to his friends. Late that night, when sitting over wine with his father and the rest of the party, an express arrived with news of the duel. Londonderry was naturally astonished, and turning to his son requested an explanation. The latter replied that ' he had a faint recollection of it, but as it happened in the morning, the particulars were erased from his memory by the pleasures of the day.' Another product of the same fertile imagination is the mistress, the daughter of a local lobster-catcher, with whom he lived on an island in Strangford Lough, and who presented him with a son who subsequently became a Commander in the Royal Navy.²

It is easier to believe the anecdotes of his kindnesses rather than his gallantries. If his name never ostentatiously appeared at the head of public subscriptions, it was because he preferred to distribute largesse in acts of private charity. He aided many

¹ *The Observer*, Aug. 18, 1822. F. Reede, *The Private Life and Character of the Marquis of Londonderry*, 11.

² *The Observer*, *loc. cit.*; Reede, 6. These anecdotes have been conclusively disproved by James Stuart in the *Belfast News-Letter*, Aug. 27, 1822.

deserving cases. One of these is related as having happened during his residence in Dublin. A neighbour named Norman, who was an officer in a local yeomanry corps, carried on a business as an umbrella-maker in the city. By attending too diligently to his military duties his business suffered and he fell into debt. One day he called on the Chief Secretary and told him that he proposed to resign his commission, and on being pressed for the reason he confessed that an execution had just been put into his house for £900. After consulting Emily, Castlereagh invited him to spend the remainder of the day with him and stay to dinner, to which Norman agreed. After the meal the minister reminded his guest that he had once applied to him for a post in the Excise. 'It is now in my power to oblige you,' he said, and immediately presented him with the office of Collector of Valentia. Norman was struck with astonishment, and before he had time to recover his power of speech the host continued: 'Lady Castlereagh has been to town and settled the execution upon your goods. Here is a £100 bill for your present exigencies; so now you owe me £1,000 which I give you three years to pay, for I know you to be a good man.' Norman's gratitude can be better imagined than described, and it need scarcely be added that his business recovered and he was able to repay the loan within twelve months.

Another hard case which was brought to his notice was that of a poor Belfast widow with a large family. Her husband had been a boatswain on a revenue cutter. After a long period of excellent service he got drunk one day, and in this perilous condition unfortunately fell overboard and was drowned. The commander of the vessel refused to recommend his widow to the Revenue Board for a pension. Castlereagh, on being informed of these distressing circumstances by the widow herself, directed enquiry to be made, and learned from Dr. Haliday and others of the dead man's merits. 'Tis hard,' he reflected, 'that the fruits of honourable exertion for twelve years should be lost by one fault; and harder that the woman should suffer for her husband's intoxication.' He instructed the woman to go to Dublin and call upon the Revenue Commissioners, sending her two guineas for the journey. She went, and found that owing to Castlereagh's exertions her name was now on the pension list. In addition she received the sum of twenty-five pounds from her benefactor for

the purpose of fitting out her two sons for a naval school, into which he had procured their admission.¹

The story of his narrow escape from death at the hands of highway robbers should perhaps be recounted here. Being fond of shooting he was in the habit of beating up the Dublin mountains above Dundrum, and often went out on these expeditions alone. Returning after a day's sport he stopped to refresh himself at a small inn on his way. Three ruffians who were drinking in the bar noticed with interest his distinguished appearance and the fact that he changed a two-guinea note. When he left the inn, they followed him. In a short time two of them accosted him and enquired the hour, the other remaining in the background. Castlereagh was carrying a double-barrelled fowling-piece which one robber immediately seized, but his lordship instantly drew a pocket pistol and disabled his assailant with a ball in the neck. The third robber now hastened to the assistance of his companions, and the two uninjured ruffians set upon their victim. At this moment a young man, who had chanced to see the commencement of the struggle from a distance, ran up and seized one of them by the collar. The other, who was a coward, thereupon fled, and succeeded in making good his escape; the remaining two were secured and conveyed to Dundrum. The rescuer turned out to be a naval officer who was returning from a visit to his young son. Being on half-pay and having no other means of support he could not afford to send the child to school, but kept him with an old woman in the mountains who served as a rude governess. Castlereagh on learning of the circumstances presented the officer with a commission as commander of a cutter of fourteen guns and £100 for outfit, while at the same time he saw that the child was removed to a good school in Dublin. He did not prosecute the two robbers, knowing that a death sentence must inevitably follow their indictment, but contented himself with sending them on board the tender to serve in the fleet.

It is not perhaps too much to say with his brother Charles that 'these occurrences in the life of any man would do credit, and they show Lord Castlereagh to have been possessed of a noble, kind, and generous heart.'²

¹ *The Observer*, *loc. cit.*; Reede, 17, 25. Cp. Castlereagh to Cooke, June 26, 1801: Dublin Castle MSS.

² Memoir: *Cast. Corr.* i. 76. *The Observer*, *loc. cit.*; Reede, 18-19.

5

Of the few public virtues with which Castlereagh's enemies have credited him, possibly the most prominent are his zeal for hard work and unremitting application to the business in hand. His despatches are models of accurate and detailed information, and from the numerous drafts with their frequent erasures and corrections which he has left behind, it appears that he took the greatest pains in the composition of official documents. If his style was often cumbrous and pedantic and at times approached the ridiculous, it was almost invariably lucid and forcible, both in the Secretary's office and the debating chamber. The despatches which he drew up as Chief Secretary fill over ten folio volumes in the Home Office archives, and they are all executed in the same neat flowing hand, for unlike other ministers he never (except when he was ill) employed an amanuensis. His memory for facts and figures was prodigious. One of the oldest Castle officials, who had had over fifty years' administrative experience, was astonished at the command of details which he displayed, particularly in Parliament, where 'it might have been supposed that others would have been at least his equals.'¹

In Parliament it was his manner rather than his matter that constituted his most serious handicap. His voice admitted of little variety, his sentences often came haltingly, and he sometimes indulged in quaint expressions which, if they passed unnoticed at College Green, were liable to produce titters of merriment from the surrounding benches at Westminster. Brougham's verdict that 'he was incapable of uttering two sentences of anything but in the meanest manner, in the most wretched language,' must be dismissed as relatively worthless, since it appears to have been inspired by the 'bulls' which its author was at some pains to enumerate.² Castlereagh was certainly a ready if not a polished debater, and the standard of his impromptu performances may be judged by the cool and collected manner in which he met the diatribes of Ponsonby, Plunket and Grattan in the Irish House of Commons. If he was never brilliant as a speaker, he was always

¹ Sackville Hamilton to Buckingham, June 16, 1800 : Buckingham, iii. 78.

² Brougham, ii. 124.

sensible and frequently convincing. The praise which he drew from Pitt on the occasion of his first important speech in the United Parliament would not have been given so unstintingly had it been undeserved.¹ Sir Walter Scott's opinion reaches very close to the mark, should it not actually strike it. 'His speeches, always distinguished by strong sense, unflinching energy, and lofty feeling, were generally full of matter,' wrote Scott, 'and often abounded with vigorous and conclusive arguments; but they wanted the charm of poetic fancy, they were destitute of the force of condensed expression, and seldom rose to the height of impassioned oratory.' If his expressions were sometimes far from logical and correct, 'then he was always up to the occasion,' noted Scott in his diary, 'and upon important matters was an orator to convince if not to delight his hearers.'²

It was as a leader and a manager of the House rather than solely as a speaker in it that his talents were displayed to the greatest advantage. By sheer force of will he brought himself to a constant attendance at College Green, which at heart he disliked, while his amiable manners and adroit handling of a volatile and frequently treacherous following placed him in the forefront of political managers before he was thirty-two. A country member to whom he introduced himself on the occasion of the first Union debate in 1799 confessed that he immediately fell under the spell of his charm. This gentleman described the Chief Secretary in a letter to Alexander Knox as 'the second political character of the age.' 'What other is there,' he asked, 'that has produced a Pitt and a Castlereagh?'³

'History, tradition, or the fiction of romance,' wrote Barrington in his *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, 'contain no instance of any Minister who so fearlessly deviated from all the principles which ought to characterise the servant of a constitutional monarch or the citizen of a free country.'⁴ It is possible that had Castlereagh gone out of office at the conclusion of the Rebellion, this and other judgments of his public character might have been

¹ See above, p. 402.

² *Cast. Corr.* i. 105. J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, v. 58 (ed. 1900).

³ Knox to Castlereagh, Feb. 9, 1801: *Cast. Corr.* iv. 30.

⁴ Barrington, *op. cit.* 230.

very different. In July 1798 Alexander Knox wrote of him thus : ' His public conduct has gained the approbation of all good and moderate men. He has appeared in this political hurricane not like Addison's angel, merely directing the storm of just vengeance, but rather like the angel who guided the Ark of Noah through the deluge—shedding from the very serenity of his countenance a ray of hopeful brightness over the dark and troubled waters. In many instances loyalty has become impetuous, and his has been the happy energy to moderate and restrain it.' ¹

But if he was conspicuous by the humanity and restraint which he displayed in the suppression of the Rebellion, in his subsequent work of carrying the Union there were certain characteristic failings from which he could not escape, and which, in the opinion of the historian of his foreign policy, were ultimately to ruin ' some of the great objects which his diplomatic skill brought into the region of practical politics.' ² The uproarious and indecent scenes which he was obliged to witness at College Green created a distrust of parliamentary government which he never afterwards succeeded in losing, while his dealings with the venal members fostered a cynical attitude towards political affairs of which he would later have been gladly rid. Lord Redesdale, who succeeded Clare as Irish Chancellor in 1802, baldly stated the case against him. ' The injury which the last job has done us in point of reputation is incalculable,' he wrote on his arrival in Ireland. ' Lord Castlereagh's ideas of making men " amiable " must be forgotten. If this country is to be kept, it is to be by other politics.' ³

Again, in the air of *hauteur* and contempt with which he regarded the majority of popular demands he was at fault, and here he showed that he misunderstood the extent and potential endurance of national antipathy to British rule. In summarily rejecting the intensely democratic conception of a Member of Parliament as a delegate bound by his constituents' mandate, he was not behind his times. Nor was it very surprising that his admiration for the merits of parliamentary discussion should have

¹ Knox to Schoales, July 20, 1798 : A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 32.

² C. K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-1815*, 12 (London, 1931).

³ Redesdale to Abbot, Aug. 15, 1802 : *Colch. Corr.* i. 406.

diminished as he grew older. Indeed, such sentiments are not out of keeping with much modern political thought, but in his case they could not but accentuate a preference which increased with years for the secret rather than the open conduct of public affairs. They were a legacy left by the work, which has been plainly described by the late Lord Salisbury as consisting of 'bribing knaves into honesty and fools into common sense.'¹

'Don't be hard on Castlereagh,' said Grattan to his son in old age, 'for he loves Ireland.'² 'I must beg you not to attack Lord Castlereagh,' he repeated on his death-bed. 'The Union is past, the business between me and him is over, and it is for the interest of Ireland that Lord Castlereagh should be Minister.'³ It is to be regretted that the younger Grattan observed this precept less faithfully in his writings than in his speeches. In his *Life* of his father he has sought to perpetuate a number of malicious falsehoods with which the name of Castlereagh is still associated by party fancy. His account of the Union struggle is flagrantly unjust to the minister, and the anecdotes which he cites are generally untrustworthy. For instance, the story that Castlereagh was summarily turned out of Sir John Blackwood's house in County Down for presuming to offer its owner a peerage in return for his support of the Union is very doubtful.⁴

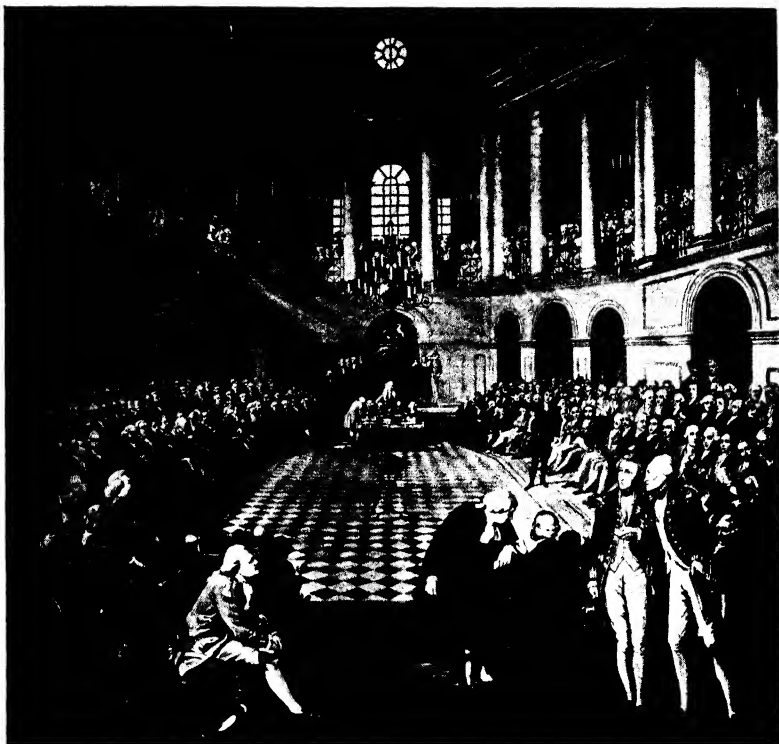
Of course many of the incidents, which the patriots in later years described over their port with characteristic elaboration as having occurred during the negotiations on behalf of the measure, contain an element of truth. One, which is said to have been related by the individual concerned, is typical of the situations which must have confronted the Chief Secretary in the process of his work. During one of the critical debates he visited Robert Shapland Carew, member for the borough of Waterford, who was at that time confined to his bed through illness. In reply to his offer of some inducement should he vote for the Union, Carew angrily told him that, ill though he was, he would get up and go down to College Green and disclose this offer from his place in the House. 'Do,' Castlereagh said, 'and I will deny point-blank every word you utter.' 'Then nothing will be left for us but to take a walk to the Fifteen Acres,' replied Carew. However,

¹ *Quarterly Review*, cxi. 204 (Jan. 1862).

² C. L. Falkiner, *Studies in Irish History and Biography*, 182.

³ Grattan, v. 553.

⁴ Grattan, iv. 432.



THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS. 1790-1800

From the painting by Henry Barraud and John Hayter in the collection of Sir William Whitla, M.D.

Every character represented has been copied from an authentic portrait. Lord Castlereagh is sitting on the left, second from the near end of the front bench. Beside him with black hair sits Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The Member addressing the House is John Philpot Curran. In the left foreground Lord Chancellor Clare can be seen showing a paper to Under-Secretary Cooke; Lord Bristol (the Earl Bishop) is leaning against the Bar; and Lord Charlemont looks across from his chair towards Henry Grattan and Henry Flood, who are each dressed in Volunteer uniform. Lord Cornwallis stands in the left background against the wall. Speaker Foster is in the Chair.

the threatened exposure was not made, and nothing more is known of the affair.¹ Possibly the recalcitrant member may have heard something of the minister's marksmanship and thought better of his overture.

The legend of the perfection of the Irish Parliament, which rapidly grew after its demise, was as extraordinary and no less pernicious in its effects than that of Napoleon's perfection in France. In 1873 Barraud and Hayter painted the well-known picture of the Irish House of Commons which is reproduced in these pages. The artists' object was principally to stimulate popular interest in the recently-formed Home Rule League, whose leaders were endeavouring to win the ear of Gladstone, and looked to securing a measure of local autonomy for Ireland. The picture was exhibited throughout the country for propagandist purposes, and by means of a newly-discovered scientific process innumerable copies were made for public sale and circulation. The Prime Minister, in fact, is said to have paid a striking and spontaneous tribute to the memory of the legislature at College Green by falling on his knees before the painting when he first saw it.² As a work of art it appeared stilted and lifeless : as a Nationalist advertisement it doubtless helped to turn a number of votes at the General Election in the following year. The sight of Curran addressing the House with a characteristic flourish reminded the electors of the eloquence of its members, while the austere figure of Grattan standing outside the Bar and proudly holding the charter of national liberties stirred many a patriotic heart with the hope that the Irish Parliament would one day sit at College Green again. It is difficult to imagine from its outward appearance a more docile and benevolent assembly than that which has been portrayed by the artists Barraud and Hayter. It is equally difficult to imagine a more corrupt and bigoted one in fact than that whose existence was terminated by the Act of Union.

Writing from Dublin some years after the passing of the Act, Dr. Drennan, the former United Irishman, asked sarcastically : ' I wonder if Lord Castlereagh would like to see a History of the Irish Union in a clean manner, and whether he would supply

¹ W. J. Fitzpatrick, *Ireland before the Union*, 165.

² Private information.

documents for it?'¹ Oddly enough this was just what Lord Castlereagh did wish to see. It was a project which he had long been turning over in his mind, and, as a modern essayist has remarked with reference to this desire, 'a man does not, as a rule, endeavour to perpetuate his own infamy.'² He finally begged his old friend and private secretary, Alexander Knox, to undertake the work, promising to open to him without reserve all the official correspondence, as well as his own private papers and those of Camden, Cornwallis, Cooke and others agreeable. 'Such a work is essential to the public interest,' he urged—'I had almost said, to the public safety.'³ By reason of his previous literary accomplishments and the confidential relations in which he had been placed with the leading members of the government, Knox was peculiarly well qualified to perform this task. Unfortunately continued ill-health compelled him to decline it.⁴ No capable and satisfactory substitute could be found, and so an invaluable opportunity was lost of dispelling what Castlereagh called 'the unwholesome mists which overhang the Union.' Indeed, a complete and impartial account of the period based on all the available sources of evidence has yet to be written.

The letter in which Castlereagh conveyed his invitation to Knox is in itself a remarkable document, and it must be regarded as constituting the supreme *apologia* for his Irish administration. 'The demons of the present day are at work to make those who carried the Union odious; as first having cruelly oppressed, and then sold their country,' he wrote not long after the trial of Peter Finnerty. 'The world's forgetfulness of the events which are a few years gone by enables them to mislead numbers. . . . I feel confident that the intentions of government for the public good at that time will bear the strictest scrutiny. There is nothing in the subsequent history of the individual actors that can throw a shade of mercenary motives around them. For myself I can at least state that, neither in my own person nor in that of any of my family, do I at this moment enjoy any favours from the Crown conferred subsequent to my being first employed

¹ Drennan to McTier, Aug. 1806: *Drennan Letters*, 1270.

² J. G. Lockhart, *The Peacemakers, 1814-1815*, 248 (London, 1932).

³ Castlereagh to Knox, March 30, 1811: A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 539.

⁴ Memoir: *Cast. Corr.* i. 81. *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xxxi. 304.

in the public service in 1798 : neither honorary nor pecuniary. I believe their measures, when fairly explained, will stand equally the test of criticism ; and that they may be shown to have combined humanity with vigour of administration, when that had to watch over the preservation of the State ; whilst in the conduct of the Union they pursued honestly the interests of Ireland, yielding not more to private interests than was requisite to disarm so mighty a change of any convulsive character.' ¹

6

On the face of it the Union was a good bargain, but as it turned out the arrangement never had a chance of working fairly. Its disappointments and shortcomings are well known. Of the essential measures which Castlereagh insisted should accompany the incorporation of the two Kingdoms if the Union was to prove permanent, the admission of Catholics to Parliament was postponed for over a quarter of a century, and tithes had to wait a further ten years before receiving effective legislative attention—the plan of a State provision for the Catholic clergy was never realised. As has been seen, this last reform was perhaps the most needed of all, and in abandoning it the English Government lost the best opportunity she ever had of securing the loyalty of the bulk of her Roman Catholic subjects. No better moment could have been chosen than Castlereagh suggested to confer this favour, for the clergy had expressed themselves willing to receive it, and the laity was in general satisfied with the Union as a necessary preliminary to political emancipation—in fact both classes showed their hopeful disposition at the General Election of 1802, when not a single candidate who had supported the Union was defeated.² But *dis aliter visum*. The Irish Protestant Church Establishment remained as much hated as ever by the majority, its anomalous condition was unaffected by any of the tithe reforms, and it finally collapsed before the Hawarden axe, the rottenest branch of the Upas tree of ascendancy, and unmourned save by those who had enjoyed its patronage. The ameliorative

¹ Castlereagh to Knox, March 30, 1811 : A. Knox, *Remains*, iv. 539. The text of this interesting letter has been reprinted in Londonderry, *op. cit.* 20.

² *Annual Register*, 1802, at p. 194.

legislation of the latter part of the nineteenth century, tempered with salutary doses of coercion, was, however, a certain compensation for the fact that Ireland had become a pawn in the game of English party politics.

There were other compensations, too. Castlereagh's scheme of attaching the Presbyterian leaders to the Government by increasing the *Regium Donum* was adopted, and the revised scale of payments was put into operation in 1803.¹ This concession probably contributed more than any other cause to cement the loyalty of which for over a century Ulster, the one-time birthplace of republicanism, had been so proud. Then the growth of Irish commerce and industry generally which the minister had foretold was to a certain extent realised. For instance, the value of Irish exports, which had shown a decrease during the last ten years of the local Parliament, increased by thirteen millions sterling in the first decade of the United Parliament, and continued to do so throughout the century.² This prosperity was not unfelt in Dublin, and it may possibly explain the enthusiastic reception which was accorded Castlereagh by the mob on the occasion of his visit to the city with King George IV in 1821. The mob, which twenty years before had burned him in effigy outside his house in Merrion Street and broken his windows, now cheered him tumultuously when he appeared at the theatre and the Mansion House, and even attempted to chair him through the streets. His comment on this newly-won popularity, which he did not exactly relish, is characteristic. 'I am grown as popular in 1821 as unpopular formerly, and with as little merit,' he said; 'and of the two unpopularity is the more convenient and gentlemanlike.'³

But if agriculture flourished in the south and linen-weaving in the north, other industries which had sprung to life under Grattan's Parliament as speedily expired under the new *régime*. The cry got abroad that Ireland had been robbed as well as betrayed by her more powerful sister. The torch of rebellion still flickered, Emmet and his companions went to the scaffold, and the long, grim struggle for 'repeal' began. Meanwhile

¹ Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, iii. 519 *et seq.*

² R. M. Martin, *Ireland before and after the Union*, 55 *et passim*.

³ C. L. Falkiner, *Studies in Irish History and Biography*, 178.

willing hands wove a black legend about the name and memory of the Unionist minister. When he died his enemies sang joyfully the Byronic epigram :

‘ So *he* has cut his throat at last ! He ? Who ?
The man who cut his country’s long ago.’¹

Who had deliberately goaded his countrymen into rebellion by the cruellest means ? Who sold his country for gold and his honour for political preferment ? Who removed the guardian of national liberties from College Green and again enslaved Ireland ? Who was responsible for broken pledges and English duplicity ? Who was ‘ the cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant ’ who dabbled his ‘ sleek young hands in Erin’s gore ’ ?² In each case the answer was ‘ Bloody Castlereagh.’ Enough has been written, it is hoped, to show how baseless in fact such accusations are. Though his public character betrayed serious faults, Castlereagh never acted unpatriotically. Even Daniel O’Connell, one of his most bitter political opponents, declared that ‘ Castle-reagh with all his faults was a fine fellow and as brave as Achilles.’³ In the statesman’s mind, however, the popular ideal of a narrow, selfish nationalism was overshadowed by the wider and nobler concepts of imperial unity and international co-operation.

It is usually unwise to speculate upon the probable course of history had events happened otherwise than they did, but in the case of Castlereagh it seems safe to concede that, had his advice been followed in 1801, the nineteenth century would have been one of increased amity in the relations of the two countries, instead of renewed bitterness and misunderstanding, and the Union which he had striven so long and courageously to effect would not ultimately have been dissolved in bloodshed.

¹ Lord Byron, *Works*, xvii. 246 (ed. Moore, 1833).

² *Id.* xv. 106 (Dedication to ‘ Don Juan ’).

³ R. H. Gronow, *Reminiscences of Captain Gronow*, i. 334 (London 1892).

APPENDIX II

LIST OF PRIVY COUNCILLORS OF IRELAND DURING THE PERIOD WHEN CASTLEREAGH WAS CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE LORD-LIEUTENANT, WITH THE DATES OF THEIR APPOINTMENTS.¹

1761.	July	8.	Thomas Conolly.
	"	8.	Charles Moore, Marquess of Drogheda.
	"	16.	William Henry Fortescue, Earl of Clermont.
1763.	Sept.	19.	George De-la-Poer Beresford, Marquess of Waterford.
1765.	Oct.	18.	Francis Seymour Conway, Marquess of Hertford.
1767.	July	31.	Theophilus Jones.
	Oct.	9.	Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry.
	"	14.	Frederick Campbell.
1768.	Feb.	2.	Thomas St. Lawrence, Earl of Howth.
	June	9.	John Beresford.
	Sept.	15.	Arthur Chichester, Earl of Donegall.
1769.	March	23.	George Macartney, Earl Macartney.
1770.	May	7.	Henry King.
1771.	April	22.	Edmund Sexton Pery, Viscount Pery.
	Sept.	14.	Arthur Saunders Gore, Earl of Arran.
1772.	Nov.	30.	Sir John Blaquiere (Baron De Blaquiere, 1800).
1774.	Dec.	19.	Richard Boyle, Earl of Shannon.
	"	19.	Charles Coote, Earl of Bellamont.
1775.	Oct.	28.	James Stopford, Earl of Courtown.
1776.	July	15.	Arthur Annesley, Earl of Mount Norris.
	Dec.	14.	Joshua Cooper.
1777.	Jan.	25.	Sir Richard Heron.
	March	6.	William Robert Fitzgerald, Duke of Leinster.
	"	6.	Robert Tilson Deane, Baron Muskerry.
1779.	Feb.	4.	Robert Fowler, Archbishop of Dublin.
	July	1.	Sir Henry Cavendish.

¹ This list, which has been compiled from the original signatures to the Privy Council Roll of Oaths, now preserved in the Record Tower, Dublin Castle, includes all Counsellors who were alive at any time between November 1798 and February 1801.

1779. July 9. John Foster.
 Nov. 15. Charles Agar, Archbishop of Cashel.
1780. Dec. 23. Frederick Howard, Earl of Carlisle.
 „ 23. William Eden, Baron Auckland.
 „ 29. Murrough O'Bryen, Earl of Inchiquin (Marquess of Thomond, 1800).
1782. April 14. William Henry Cavendish Bentinck, Duke of Portland.
 May 14. Richard Fitzpatrick.
 June 7. Robert Cunningham, Earl of Rossmore.
 July 13. Barry Yelverton, Baron Yelverton (Viscount Avonmore, 1800).
 Sept. 15. William Wyndham Grenville, Baron Grenville.
 „ 15. George Nugent Temple Grenville, Marquess of Buckingham.
 „ 27. James Cuffe, Baron Tyrawley.
1783. June 9. William Wyndham.
 July 18. Charles Tottenham, Earl of Ely (Marquess of Ely, 1800).
 Aug. 18. James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont.
 Sept. 13. Thomas Pelham.
 „ 19. Henry Grattan.¹
1783. Oct. 17. George Ogle.
 Nov. 21. Thomas Oliver Plunket, Baron Louth.
 Dec. 20. John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare.
 „ 20. Thomas Kelly.
1784. Feb. 24. Richard Wellesley, Earl of Mornington (Marquess Wellesley, 1800).
 „ 24. Thomas Orde, Baron Bolton.
 April 12. William Augustus Pitt.
 Oct. 6. William Brabazon Ponsonby.
1785. Jan. 25. John Crosbie, Earl of Glandore.
 March 13. David La Touche, Junior.
 Nov. 1. Robert Stewart, Earl of Londonderry.
 „ 5. George Mason Villiers, Earl of Grandison.
 „ 28. John Denis Browne, Earl of Altamont (Marquess of Sligo, 1800).
 Dec. 23. John Monck Mason.
1786. Jan. 24. Sir John Parnell.
 March 4. Charles Dillon Lee, Viscount Dillon.
 Aug. 16. Henry Lawes Luttrell, Earl of Carhampton.
1787. March 14. Hugh Carleton, Viscount Carleton.
 Dec. 16. Alleyne Fitzherbert, Baron St. Helens.

¹ 'October 6, 1798. Struck out of the Privy Council by His Excellency Charles Marquess Cornwallis pursuant to the King's Commands.'

1789. April 21. Robert Hobart, Lord Hobart.
 Aug. 12. Arthur Wolfe, Baron Kilwarden (Viscount Kilwarden, 1800).
 Sept. 12. George Agar, Baron Callan.
 „ 26. John Joshua Proby, Earl of Carysfort.
 Dec. 26. James Fitzgerald.
1790. Jan. 5. John Fane, Earl of Westmoreland.
 „ 16. Richard Longfield, Baron Longueville (Viscount Longueville, 1800).
1792. Feb. 22. George Warde.
1792. Nov. 27. Sir Hercules Langrishe.
1793. Jan. 29. George Frederick Nugent, Earl of Westmeath.
 Feb. 13. Lord Charles Fitzgerald (Baron Lecale, 1800).
 „ 13. Arthur Acheson, Viscount Gosford.
 „ 13. William Forward.
 Oct. 29. George Lewis Jones, Bishop of Kildare.
1794. Jan. 20. Denis Brown.
 „ 20. Sylvester Douglas (Baron Glenbervie, 1800).
 „ 23. Arthur Hill, Marquess of Downshire.¹
 Feb. 7. John James Hamilton, Marquess of Abercorn.
 Nov. 17. William Beresford, Archbishop of Tuam.
1795. Jan. 4. Sir Guy Carleton, Earl of Dorchester.
 Jan. 4. William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, Earl Fitzwilliam.
 „ 29. William Newcombe, Archbishop of Armagh.
 March 31. John Jeffreys Pratt, Earl Camden.
 June 29. Robert Ross.
 Aug. 18. Isaac Corry.
1796. June 6. Barry Maxwell, Earl of Farnham.
 „ 6. Sackville Hamilton.
 July 1. Lodge Morres.
 Oct. 26. Richard Hely-Hutchinson, Viscount Donoughmore (Earl of Donoughmore, 1800).
1797. June 29. Edmund Henry Pery, Baron Glentworth (Viscount Limerick, 1800).
 July 11. Walter Butler, Earl of Ormonde and Ossory.
 Oct. 20. Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh.
 Dec. 4. Robert Jocelyn, Earl of Roden.
1798. Jan. 4. Sir Ralph Abercromby.
 June 20. Charles Cornwallis, Marquess Cornwallis.
 Aug. 2. Richard Annesley.
 „ 2. John Toler (Baron Norbury, 1800).
1799. Jan. 29. Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, Bishop of Meath.

¹ 'February 18, 1800. Struck out of the Privy Council by His Excellency Charles Marquess Cornwallis pursuant to the King's Commands.'

1800.	Dec.	16.	William Stuart, Archbishop of Armagh.
	„	16.	St. George Daly.
	„	16.	John Stewart.
	„	16.	Charles H. Coote.
1801.	Jan.	27.	M. Fitzgerald.
	„	27.	John Ormsby Vandeleur.

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